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MOLTKE.

Frontispiece.

MOLTKE

A

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY

BY

WILLIAM O'CONNOR MORRIS

SOMETIME SCHOLAR OF ORIEL COLLEGE OXFORD

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SECOND EDITION

residesque movebit
Tullus in arma viros, et jam desueta triumphis
Agmina . . . . . .
Eruet ille Argos, Agamemnoniasque Mycenas,
Ipsumque Æacidem, genus armipotentis Achilli,
Ultus avos Trojæ, templa et temerata Minervæ.

VIRGIL.

WITH EIGHT PORTRAITS, MAPS, AND PLANS OF BATTLEFIELDS

Yy. 9.-13

LONDON
WARD AND DOWNEY
(*Limited*)
12 YORK BUILDINGS ADELPHI, W.C.
1894

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MOLTKE

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

In the present edition of this book I have removed misprints and slips of the pen; and I have corrected any errors, discovered by myself or indicated by well-informed persons. These emendations are few, and do not, in the slightest degree, affect my estimate of Moltke, or the tenor and import of my narrative. The positions I have taken, to use a military phrase, have been severely reconnoitred, and even assailed; but I hope I have maintained them, and I believe them to be impregnable. I have added a few notes in the Appendix, which may increase their strength.

I shall not publish the commendations bestowed on this work, in letters, from two eminent foreign writers, and from an English military critic, easily the first of his craft since the death of General Hamley. But my acknowledgments are due to many contributors in quarterly, weekly, and daily journals, for comments, often too eulogistic, and always candid and intelligent. My *Edinburgh Reviewer* meant mischief; but—remarkable praise on the part of an enthusiastic Moltkeite—he has described me "as a most able advocatus

Diaboli;" and he has not the slightest doubt that "we are furnished with every single argument against Von Moltke's reputation as a commander." I regret that I cannot return the compliment, and greet him as an able advocatus Dei; as I have pointed out in a note, he has, with extraordinary awkwardness, overthrown an idol which he thinks more worthy of admiration than Napoleon. As to my rare hostile critics, I might pass them over; their speech bewrayeth them. They are all, or nearly all, soldiers, very possibly good soldiers; but they are not versed in the higher parts of war, or trained to deal with masses of conflicting testimony, the discipline, beyond everything else, required in the military historian; and they are frantic that a mere *pekin* should invade the sacred domain of pipe-clay. I have noticed some of their remarks, but persons of sense and experience know the value of the evidence of petty experts in what is essentially a judicial inquiry. One gem of purest ray serene I must save from the dark unfathomed caves of the *United Service Magazine*. One of its writers has gravely argued that, because a Colonel Mitchell made a silly estimate of Napoleon, therefore, and for that reason, my estimate of Moltke must be ridiculous. Since the Aristotelian Freshman proved a chestnut horse to be a horse chestnut, and *vice versâ*, there has been no more exquisite morsel of logic.

This book has been published a few months ago only, but Time has dealt with it, as it deals with

everything. Macmahon has since gone, chivalrously forgiven by France for Sedan, and Miribel the rising Marcellus of her reformed army. Several works of Moltke have quite lately appeared, which illustrate the hatred of France, and the want of knowledge of men, which I have indicated as faults in his character. His "Tactical Problems" furnish additional proof of his immense professional skill and incessant industry, great qualities which, in his case, have in a large measure supplied the absence of the highest genius. I cannot read the works of Kunz and Hœnig in the originals, and translations of them do not, I understand, exist; but, if I can judge from an exhaustive review, these commentators curiously confirm all that I have written as to Moltke's direction of the war of 1870, after Sedan, and as to his numerous mistakes and false calculations.

WILLIAM O'CONNOR MORRIS,
August, 1894.

PREFACE.

YEARS will, doubtless, elapse before a complete biography of Moltke can be given to the world. It is impossible at present exactly to know the part he had in the organization of the Prussian army, and even in the military operations of 1866-70-1; very little of his correspondence has seen the light, especially his correspondence with public men; and his figure is still too near the eyes of the living to stand in the true perspective of history. But the work he did, and his great achievements have been, to a considerable extent, ascertained; his character and his career may be traced, if not in all their parts, in a fairly distinct outline; and it may be advisable to attempt a short description of them, as a "prenotion," in Bacon's phrase, of the more perfect picture reserved for the future. I have endeavoured in this study correctly to record what Moltke accomplished in the preparation of war, and in the direction of armies in the field, to form a just estimate of his exploits, and to portray the man in his real nature. I trust I have alike kept clear of extravagant eulogy—profuse and undiscerning in this case too often—and of undeserved

detraction and censure. Of one part of this work I shall simply say this: In narrating the main events of the second phase of the war of 1870-1, I have given prominence to the extraordinary efforts of France, and to the remarkable deeds of her great soldier, Chanzy, for these passages of a grand page of history have been little noticed, and have been almost lost sight of, in the bewildering glare of German triumphs.

Many of the authorities from which my text has been composed will be found in the notes contained in this volume. I have, however, subjoined a complete list, which may be of use to the general reader. Unfortunately I do not know the German language, and thus I have been unable to read some books which throw light on Moltke's career; and in many instances I have been obliged to rely on translations. Nevertheless, I hope, in spite of these drawbacks, that I have not wholly failed to master my subject.

I.

FOR MOLTKE'S LIFE AND HIS WRITINGS BEFORE 1870.

1. Moltke, his life and character. Translated by Mary Herms. London: Osgood & Co., 1892.

2. Letters of Field-Marshal Count Helmuth von Moltke to his mother and brothers. Translated by Clara Bell and Henry W. Fischer. 2 vols. London: Osgood & Co., 1891.

3. Moltke's Letters on the East. Translated into French by Alfred Marchand. Paris: Libraire Fischbacher.

4. The Russians in Bulgaria and Rumelia in 1828 and 1829.

From the German of Baron von Moltke. London: Murray, 1854.

5. Moltke's Campaign of Italy in 1859. Translated into French. Paris: J. Dumaine, 1862.

6. Moltke's Letters on Russia. Translated into French by Alfred Marchand. Paris: Libraire Gaudez et Fischbacher, 1877.

7. Moltke's Remarks on the French Army, referred to in Le Maréchal de Moltke. Par. xxx. Paris Libraire Moderne, 1888.

II.

The Organization and Condition of the Prussian and German Armies in 1866-70.

1. Analysis of the Organization of the Prussian Army. By Lieutenant Talbot. London: Trübner & Co., 1871.

2. Rapports Militaires écrits de Berlin, 1866-1870. Par le Colonel Baron Stoffel. Paris: Garnier Frères, 1871.

3. Note sur l'Organization de la Confédération de l'Allemagne du Nord. Wilhelmshoe, 1871. By Napoleon III.

4. The Brain of an Army. By Spenser Wilkinson. London: Macmillan & Co., 1890.

5. The Prussian Campaign of 1866, a Tactical Retrospect. Translated from the German. By Colonel Ouvry. London: Mitchell & Co.

6. A Retrospect on the Tactical Retrospect. Same Translator and Publishers, 1871.

7. The Prussian Infantry in 1869. Same Translator and Publishers, 1870.

8. Letters on Artillery, Cavalry, and Infantry. By Prince Kraft Hohenlohe. Translated by Colonel Walford. 3 vols. London: Edward Stanford, 1888-1889.

9. L'art de combattre l'Armée Française. By Prince Frederick Charles. French Translation. Paris: E. Dentu, 1870.

III.

The War in Bohemia in 1866.

1. The Campaign of 1866 in Germany. "The Prussian Staff History." Translated into English by Colonel von Wright and Captain Henry M. Hozier. London: 1872.

2. Les Luttes de l'Autriche en 1866. The Austrian Staff History. Translated into French by Franz Croussé. 3 vols. Paris: J. Dumaine, 1870.

3. Guerre de la Prusse et de l'Italie contre l'Autriche et la Confédération Germanique en 1866. Par Ferdinand Le Comte Colonel Fédéral Suisse. Lausanne. 2 vols. 1866.

4. La Guerre de 1866. Par le Major Vandevelde. Paris: Charles Tanera, 1869.

5. Great Campaigns. Major C. Adams. Edinburgh: Blackwoods, 1877. This work includes an account of the war of 1870-1.

6. Moltke on the Battle of Königgrätz. Translated from the German by Spenser Wilkinson. *The United Service Magazine.*

7. Field-Marshal Count von Moltke. By General Viscount Wolseley. *The United Service Magazine*, Oct. 1891. Part II.

8. M. de Moltke. Par Charles Malo. Paris: Berger Levrault et Cie. 1891.

IV.

The French Army in 1870.

1. L'Armée Française en 1867. By General Trochu. Paris: Amyot, 1870.

2. Les Forces Militaires de la France en 1870. Par le Comte de la Chapelle. Napoleon III. Paris: Amyot, 1872.

3. Les Causes de nos Désastres. Attributed to Napoleon III. Bruxelles. J. Rozez, 1871.

4. La Verité sur la Campagne de 1870. Par Fernand Giraudeau. Marseille, 1871.

5. L'Administration de l'Armée Française. Paris: Henri Plon, 1870.

6. Commission des Conférences Militaires. Paris: J. Dumaine, 1869. See also Note Sur l'Organisation Militaire, and les Rapports du Colonel Stoffel, before referred to.

V.

The War of 1870-1.

1. The Franco-German War, 1870-1. "The Prussian Staff History." Two parts. 1st part, 2 vols.; 2nd part, 3 vols.

Translated by Captain Clarke, from the German official account. London, 1874, 1883.

2. The Franco-German War of 1870. By Field-Marshal Count Helmuth von Moltke. Translated by Clara Bell and Henry W. Fischer. 2 vols. London: Osgood & Co., 1891. The references in the text are to this edition. An edition corrected by Mr. A. Forbes has also been published.

3. The War for the Rhine Frontier. By v. Rüstow. Translated by J. L. Needham. 3 vols. Edinburgh: Blackwoods, 1872.

4. The French Campaign, 1870-1. By. A. Nieumann. Translated by Colonel E. Newdigate. London: W. Mitchell & Co., 1872.

5. The Operations of the Bavarian Army Corps, under General von der Tann. By Captain H. Helvig. Translated by Captain G. S. Schawbe. London: Henry S. King & Co., 1874.

6. The Operations of the German Armies in France from Sédan to the end of the War. By W. Blumé. Translated by Major F. M. Jones. London: Henry S. King & Co., 1872.

7. The Operations of the South Army, in January and February, 1871. By Count Wartensleben. Translated by Colonel von Wright. London: Henry S. King & Co., 1872.

8. Histoire de la Guerre de 1870–1. Par le Général Baron Ambert. Paris: H. Plon, 1873.

9. Histoire de la Guerre de 1870. Par V. D. Paris: J. Dumaine, 1871.

10. La Guerre de 1870. Bruxelles, 1871.

11. L'Armée du Rhin. Par le Maréchal Bazaine. Paris: H. Plon, 1872.

12. Episodes de la Guerre de 1870. Par l'ex-Maréchal Bazaine. Madrid: Gaspar, 1883.

13. Sédan. Par le Général de Wimpffen. Paris: Libraire Internationale, 1871.

14. La Journée de Sédan. Par le Général Ducrot. Paris: E. Dentu, 1873.

15. La Campagne de 1870. Par un Officier de l'Armée du Rhin. Bruxelles.

16. Armée de Metz. Par le Général Deligny. Münster, 1871.

17. Opérations et Marches du 5me Corps. Par le Général de Failly. Bruxelles: A. M. Labèque.

18. Metz Campagne et Négociations. Par un officier supérieur de l'Armée du Rhin. Paris: J. Dumaine, 1872.

19. Rapport du Général de Rivière. Paris: E. Dentu, 1873.

20. Procés Bazaine. Paris: *Le Moniteur Universel.*

21. The Campaign of Sedan. By George Hooper. London: George Bell & Sons, 1887.

22. Decisive Battles since Waterloo. By T. W. Knox. New York and London: Putnams Sons, 1887.

23. The Great Battles of 1870 and the Blockade of Metz. By H. B. Franklyn. London: Trübner & Co., 1887.

24. La Défense de Paris. Par le Général Ducrot. Paris: E. Dentu, 1875. 4 vols.

25. Le Siége de Paris. Par le Général Vinoy. Paris: A. Plon, 1872.

26. Memoire sur la Défense de Paris. Par E. Viollet le Duc. Paris: Vve. Morel et Cie., 1871.

27. La Guerre en Province. Par Charles de Freycinet. Paris: Michel Levy, 1871.

28. La Première Armée de la Loire. Par le Général D'Aurelle de Paladines.

29. La Deuxième Armée de la Loire. Par le Général Chanzy. Paris: H. Plon, 1871.

30. Campagne de l'Armée du Nord. Par le Général Faidherbe. Paris: E. Dentu, 1871.

31. Enquête Parlementaire. See Bazaine sur la Guerre de 1870 and Général Ducrot's fourth volume.

32. Fortification. By Major Clarke. London: Murray, 1890.

33. Le Maréchal de Moltke, Organisateur et stratége. Par le Général Lewal. Paris: L. Baudoin, 1891.

34. Le Feld-Maréchal de Moltke, Revue Militaire Suisse. Par Abel Veuglaise.

35. Tactical Deductions from the War of 1870-1. By A. V. Bogulawski. Translated by Colonel Graham. London: Henry S. King & Co., 1872.

36. The Campaign of 1870. Republished from the *Times.* London: Bentley, 1871.

37. The Special Correspondence of the *Times*, the *Daily News*, and the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

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Different Works not included in the above List, and Relating to Military and General History.

1. Commentaires de Napoleon Premier. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1867. 6 vols.

2. Théorie de la Grande Guerre. Par le Général de Clausewitz. Translated into French by Colonel de Vitry. Paris: L. Baudoin, 1886. 4 vols.

3. Stratégie et Grande Tactique. Par le Général Pierron. Paris: Berger Levrault et Cie., 1887. 2 vols.

4. La Guerre Moderne. Par le Général Derrécagaix. Paris: L. Baudoin et Cie., 1890. 2 vols.

5. The Operations of War. By General Hamley. Blackwoods, 1889.

6. War. By Colonel F. Maurice. London: Macmillan & Co., 1891.

7. A History of Modern Europe. By C. A. Fyffe. London: Cassell & Co., 1889. 3 vols.

8. The Overthrow of the German Confederation. By Sir A. Malet. London: Longmans, 1870.

9. The Refounding of the German Empire. By Colonel Malleson. London: Seeley & Co., 1893.

10. Who is responsible for the War? By Scrutator. London: Rivingtons, 1871.

11. France and Prussia. Correspondence relating to the Negotiations preliminary to the War. Presented to Parliament, 1870.

William O'Connor Morris.

29th June, 1893.

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MOLTKE:

A BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL STUDY.

CHAPTER I.

Estimate formed of Moltke in Germany, France, and England—His birth and parentage—Sent to the Military School of Copenhagen; enters the Danish, and then the Prussian army; is attached to the Staff College at Berlin—His early promise and attainments — His domestic life and excellence—He travels in the East, and attempts to reform the Turkish army—The battle of Nisib—"His Letters on the East"—He is attached to the staff of the 4th Corps d'Armée—His marriage—His work on the war of 1828-29—He is made aide-de-camp of Prince Henry of Prussia—His view of 1848 in Germany—He becomes Chief of the Staff of the 4th Corps and a friend of the Crown Prince, afterwards King and Emperor—Travels in England, Russia, and France—Records of these experiences—He is appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Prussian Army.

In the early spring of 1891 Germany sate mourning for her most renowned soldier. To the imagination of the Teutonic race Moltke seemed a type of the mythical gods, worshipped in the past by his pagan fathers; he had wielded the bolts of Thor and the axe of Odin. His industry and skill had been main elements in the creation of that mighty instrument of war, the Prussian army, of the second

half of the century. He had directed the operations, which, in 1866, had struck down Austria in three weeks; had thrust her out of her supreme place in Germany; and had made Prussia the head of the German people. Four years afterwards he had led the crusade of the League of Germany against Imperial France; had more than avenged the disaster of Jena by the extraordinary triumphs of Metz and Sedan; had crushed the heroic rising of the French nation; and had imposed a humiliating peace at the point of his sword, within sight, so to speak, of conquered Paris.

The modest and retiring nature of the man, impatient of the tribe of undiscerning flatterers, only strengthened the chorus of general acclaim, which swelled around his grave in no uncertain accents. He had been known to his countrymen as "the great strategist"; and they described him as the first of the masters of war, surpassing even Napoleon in power and in genius. France herself, who saw in him a deadly enemy, was not blind to his remarkable parts, and especially to his administrative gifts, and while freely criticizing passages in his career, more than one French writer has given him a place above Frederick, and even beside Turenne. In England, where the worship of mere success prevails more widely than in other lands, and where the art of war is very little studied, the tribute of eulogy was without stint or measure. Moltke was transformed into an ideal hero; and it was gravely announced that he was easily supreme

in the noble company of the most famous warriors. A reaction, probably due, in part, to the publication of Moltke's work on the memorable war of 1870-71—a superficial and unjust book, bearing plainly the marks of mental decay, has set in of late against this extravagance; and the oracles have for some time been dumb which proclaimed their idol "unrivalled and faultless." In this fluctuating state of ill-led opinion, it is advisable, perhaps, to trace briefly the incidents of Moltke's life and career; to try to ascertain what he really was; to form an impartial estimate of his achievements; and to endeavour to determine his true position among the great men who have prepared war, or who have conducted military operations in the field. Such a study, no doubt, must be incomplete; our knowledge is still imperfect in many respects; and we cannot always point out the exact part played by Moltke in the most striking events in which he was a prominent actor. But the subject is one of immediate interest; and it is better, perhaps, to treat it at once, inadequate as must be the treatment, before Moltke passes into the domain of History.

Helmuth Charles Bernard Von Moltke was born in 1800, at Parchim, a little town in Mecklenburg, on an affluent of the Lower Elbe. The family of the child, of German origin, had for centuries belonged to the noblesse of the country; and it produced a soldier in the Thirty Years' War, a follower, perhaps, of the great Gustavus. It had scattered, however, over many lands; and the grandfather of the future

warrior is said to have served in the Austrian army towards the close of the eighteenth century. His sons were nearly all Prussian soldiers; one was wounded on the fatal day of Jena; another, perhaps, appeared in the train of the sovereigns who bowed the knee, at Erfurt, to the Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine; a third seems to have died, at the Beresina, in the ranks of the perishing Grand Army; and the father of Helmuth, though a Danish general, is believed to have been a Prussian officer. Of this parent of Moltke little is known, except that[1] he was almost a failure in life, and that he probably was an inferior man; but Henrietta Paschen, his wife, was a remarkable woman, of fine parts, and of great strength of character; and in the case of Moltke, as in that of Napoleon and of many other illustrious names, it was the mother who transmitted the high qualities exhibited by the renowned offspring.

General Moltke was a very poor man with a large family; and Helmuth grew up like his brothers and sisters, under the cold shade of privation and want, the best training, Napoleon has said, for a soldier. After learning the rudiments as he best could, the boy was entered a cadet at the Military School of Copenhagen when in his twelfth year. He was at this seminary until 1818; and one of his comrades has told us what was thought of him in the daily round of school life at this period. His industry was intense and never flagged; and his

[1] Moltke's "Letters," vol. i. p. 18. English translation.

marked gifts and resolute will commanded the respect of his young companions, for boys, as a rule, are good judges of character. Curiously enough, however, the stern reticence seen in the man, in mature age, was not apparent in these early days. Moltke was modest and shy, and even occasionally sad; but he was amiable, and, in short, a "good fellow"; and, in this respect, he was the exact opposite of the silent Corsican lad, who, in his teens, stood moodily apart from his mates, at Brienne. Moltke's reminiscences of the Military School, were, nevertheless, by no means happy. The discipline of the place was harsh, nay brutal; and he has said that it did him permanent harm.[2] "I had no education," he wrote to one of his brothers, "but thrashing. I have had no chance of forming a character. I am often painfully conscious of it. This want of self-reliance and constant reference to the opinions of others, even the preponderance of reason over inclination, often gives me moral depressions, such as others feel from opposite causes. They were in such a hurry to efface every prominent characteristic, every peculiarity, as they would have nipped betimes every shoot of a yew hedge, that the result was weakness of character, the most fatal of all." Moltke, however, is not just to himself, in this estimate of his mental and moral qualities. If not of the very highest order, his intellect was of remarkable power, and certainly was not dwarfed or stunted;

[2] "Letters," vol. ii. p. 112.

and he possessed firmness of purpose, and strength of character, pre-eminently among the warriors of his age.

After an apprenticeship to Court life as a page, Helmuth obtained a commission in the Danish army. Perhaps, owing to the first stirrings of an earnest desire to rise in life, but more probably to his family ties, the youth passed from the service of a petty state to that of the military Prussian monarchy, and he became a lieutenant of Prussian infantry in 1822 when just of full age. He was soon afterwards attached to the Staff College[1] at Berlin, an institution which has been the nursery of many eminent and scientific soldiers, and this proved a turning point in his career. He was already a ripe and laborious scholar; he was animated by a deep sense of duty; pinched by indigence, but with the pride of noble birth, he felt the impulse of nascent ambition; and the discipline and the studies of the place were congenial to his powerful and acute intellect, and to his strong and resolute nature. Even now devoted to military pursuits, Moltke flung himself into his work with characteristic energy; and though he did not lose his regimental rank, he remained for five years at the Staff College a most able, learned, and assiduous pupil. The time was well calculated to encourage the industry of an eager and thoughtful student of war, and to make his knowledge enlarged and

[1] "The War School" of Scharnhorst, founded in 1810, but to be traced up, perhaps, to Frederick the Great.

fruitful. The long peace, indeed, kept Europe in repose, and the great forces and changes which ultimately were profoundly to affect the military art, possessed, as yet, scarcely any influence. But the preceding era had been one of war, in grandeur beyond example; the world had been convulsed by the shock of arms echoing from Paris to Madrid and Moscow; the star of Napoleon had blazed over Europe, and had disappeared in portentous eclipse, and many eminent men had turned their minds to the interpretation of such events as Rivoli, Austerlitz, Torres Vedras, Waterloo. Not to speak of the invaluable contributions made by the chief actors in the drama themselves, the masterpieces of Napoleon in exile, and the admirable writings of the Archduke Charles, the greatest work of Jomini had appeared; and the pens of many other accomplished soldiers were skilfully illustrating the whole period.

This important literature, as may be supposed, was not neglected at the Staff College, a military seminary of the highest repute; and, indeed, Clausewitz, one of the best of critics, was, if we mistake not, lecturing at it on the campaigns of Napoleon, at this very time. Moltke eagerly studied, and completely mastered, the vast information which this era affords to a careful thinker on war, but he carried his researches much further back. He became thoroughly versed in the history of his art from the days of Hannibal to that of Frederick, and few minds, certainly, have

made the theory of the profession of arms so wholly his own. The earnest scholar, however, did not confine himself to the literature or the science of war. He seems, indeed, never to have been deeply versed in politics in the highest sense; he had not Napoleon's comprehensive grasp of political facts in their widest aspects; he was deficient in the fine political tact seen in Marlborough, Turenne, and Wellington. But he devoured general history in all its branches; he became one of the most learned of men, and, especially, he showed astonishing power in acquiring a knowledge of many tongues. French writers, however, are much in error when they describe Moltke as a mere "bookworm," "a military monk," in these laborious days. He was often employed in making surveys of different parts of the Prussian dominions and in other duties of the engineer; and this training stood him in good stead when it fell to his lot to direct armies. He travelled, too, a good deal in these years, and his notes of these journeys reveal a mind far-reaching, healthy, and rich with sympathy. He regarded the Polish race with the eye of a Prussian, yet he was touched by the memory of its glories in the past, and he almost mourns over its fallen greatness. He was strongly moved, too, by the pomp and the majesty of the Catholic ritual in the great towns of Poland, and he took a marked interest in all that he saw in Silesia. The most striking feature of these experiences is, however, the admiration shown by the author for the grandeur of Nature; it is

alike heartfelt, keen, and intelligent. The broad river and the cultivated flat suggest all kinds of felicitous thoughts; and like most dwellers in lands of plains, Moltke sought with delight the heights of the mountain. In one of his letters he dilates with ecstasy on the vast panorama of varied beauty, which unfolds itself to the eye from the top of Schneekoppe—the highest peak of the Giant Hills—the region through which, forty years afterwards, he was to move the armed strength of Prussia to the field of Sadowa.

The intelligent heads of the Staff College appreciated the remarkable promise and unceasing industry of the young officer, who seems to have easily surpassed his fellows, and Moltke was attached to the general staff of the Prussian army in 1828, having been an instructor for a short time at a district military school at Frankfort. It has often been observed that he rose slowly in life, and this, to a great extent, is true; but, in the first years of his career as a subaltern his merits secured him more speedy advancement than was usual at the time in the Prussian service. He served on the staff, without intermission, for some years in the first instance, and his professional duties were, in part, the same as those which he had performed at the Staff College, that is, he was much engaged in the work of surveys. But he was employed a good deal in teaching pupils at the Staff College the knowledge of war; he drew up abstracts of several important campaigns; he attended the

military manœuvres which, even in those days, formed part of the training of the Prussian soldier; he made a number of confidential reports; above all, he had ample means of making himself acquainted with the administration of the Prussian staff and with the organization of the Prussian army. He gradually became a man of some mark; a report from his pen on the Danish army was selected for special praise by the king; and in 1835 he was promoted to the rank of captain,[1] "having passed over the heads of four of his seniors and the whole body of twelve first lieutenants." He found time, however, for the pursuit of letters, to which he remained devoted through life, amidst his multifarious work on the staff; and he made his first essays, in these years, in authorship. Two works from his pen, one on "Belgium and Holland," the other on "Poland, and its present State," were published in 1830-31, but they have long been out of print and forgotten. The first, he informs us, cost him prodigious toil, but its real merits could have hardly been great, for he has said that he could not understand the reasons why the Belgians and Dutch disliked each other, an instance of the want of political insight, which we see in his ideas about Alsace and Lorraine, and their sympathies in 1870-71. The book on Poland, however, attracted attention, and was described by the censor of the press at Berlin "as the work of a man of fifty years' experience." About this time, too, Moltke under-

[1] "Letters," vol. i. p. 115.

took the task of translating the "Decline and Fall" of Gibbon, but he seems to have completed one volume only. Still under the heavy stress of poverty, he agreed to accomplish this "herculean work" for a miserable payment of about 60*l.*

The inner and domestic life of Moltke, during these years of his early manhood, reveal a very pleasing side of his character. His marked ability, his great acquirements, his growing reputation, his strong will, had made him the real head of his family, and he became its mentor and master spirit. His father, evidently a weak man, had been long disgusted with his profession; the son, though scarcely able to make ends meet, offered to divide his scanty pay with him, in the hope that he would remain in the Danish service. Moltke's letters to his brothers Adolf and Ludwig, both destined to rise above the common herd, constantly urge them forward in the path of duty; he reminds them "how[1] imperatively and seriously necessary it is that we should make our own way in life;" and yet they are wholly free from attempts at dictation and from the self-assertion of a superior nature. The spirit in which he confronted the battle of life, for the sake of those dear to him, as well as his own, appears in more than one passage like this[2]: "I will set out with new courage on the thorny race-course, on which I am striving after fortune alone, and so far from you all. May I attain it for you

[1] "Letters," vol. ii. p. 107.
[2] Ibid. vol. i. p. 10.

all!" To his mother, whom he greatly loved and revered, he gave the full expression of his thoughts and hopes; and his letters to her confirm the impression we obtain from many sources of his real character, aspiring and solid, manly, but tender. He rejoices in her sympathy, as he slowly climbs up the difficult ascent that leads to distinction; he cheers her in her life of privation and sorrow—she had been parted for years from her husband; he consults her on almost all subjects. Like other young men he often has the idea of marriage in his mind; and it is curious to note that, grave and sedate, he thinks that mere passion, in most instances, is not a prelude to a happy union; and he believes lady-killers to be nearly always fools. Yet Moltke's heart was not closed to love; he felt deeply the charms of a fair young Pole, though, with characteristic pride of race, he tells his mother he would not give her "a Polish daughter-in-law;" and he was strongly attached to two sisters, to whom he addressed a poetaster's homage, not above, we must say, the average standard. Nor was he by any means a morose recluse in these years of hard work and engrossing study. He was joyous and brilliant in social converse, and was much liked by his brother officers; and he saw a great deal of the high life of Berlin.

In 1835 Moltke set off on a long journey to the East. He explored Vienna; made his way, with difficulty, through the immense tracts watered by the Lower Danube; and reached Constantinople,

from across the Balkans. The Sultan, Mahomed II., was, at this time, engaged in an attempt to restore his military power; and he gladly availed himself of the aid of a soldier, recommended to him by the Prussian embassy. Moltke soon stood well with the advisers of the Porte, being held in peculiar esteem by Chosref Pacha, the War Minister, and commander-in-chief; and a small party of Prussian officers was sent from Berlin to help him in his new official duties. The companions remained in the East for nearly four years; and Moltke penetrated into almost every part of the vast and decaying realms of Islam, from the Bulgarian plains to the range of the Taurus. What he really accomplished in the work of reform and reorganization is well nigh unknown. The period was one when the Turkish Empire seemed on the verge of speedy extinction. Russia had made Mahomed almost a vassal; whole provinces were in constant revolt; the subject populations had begun to stir under the iron yoke of their detested masters; and the fierce janissary horde, the true embodiment of the conquering power of the Osmanli race, had perished under the hand of their chiefs. Moltke surveyed the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and gave the Sultan excellent advice, as to the defences of his renowned capital, lately menaced by the legions of Diebitsch; and he accompanied him on a journey to the Danubian fortresess, half destroyed by the last Russian invasion. He proposed, also, it seems, that a kind of militia, resembling, in some measure,

the Prussian landwehr, should be formed and arrayed throughout the Empire; and it deserves special notice that, like a true reformer, he endeavoured to adapt the reforms he suggested to national habits, tendencies, and tastes. It is evident, however, that his administrative powers made no permanent impression on the sloth, the corruption, and the imbecility of the Turkish War Office, and added little to the military strength of the Porte. The Crimean War found the Empire almost defenceless, and its armies an assemblage of ill-trained levies, in which[1] "what was good in barbarian warfare was lost without much gain from what civilization gave."

Moltke and his companions were in Asia Minor, in 1838 and 1839, attached to one of the armies of the Porte. The Kurds in the East were in revolt, and Ibrahim Pacha, a son of Mehemet Ali, the powerful and rebel satrap of Egypt, was threatening the Empire from the Syrian frontier. Moltke made his way throughout the great Peninsula, where the remains of the glories of Greece and Rome still rise to the sight amidst the waste and desolation produced by barbarian conquest, and where Nature unfolds some of her most majestic scenes. He visited several ports of the Euxine; crossed the table-land of the central provinces; descended into the Mesopotamian plain dividing the Tigris from the Euphrates; and explored the ruins of the great fortresses which formed the advanced posts

[1] "The Russians in Bulgaria and Roumelia," by Moltke, p. 269.

of the Legions in the East. One incident of these days may be noticed, for it was significant of his persevering and strongly marked character. Moltke was invited by Hafiz, the Pacha in command of the Ottoman force, to endeavour to ascertain if the Euphrates was navigable along a certain space, and could be made an avenue for the transport of supplies; and he set off on an errand, declared to be impossible by the Kurdish boatmen on the spot. Having had a raft constructed, he launched it on the stream; it was in vain that, after a few hours' experience of the force of the current, part of his crew dropped off; he persisted doggedly in the perilous attempt, and though his frail craft was half swamped, and nearly dashed to pieces, he successfully threaded a maze of cataracts, and returned to his chief with a detailed report. Moltke made his earliest experiences in the field at this period; and it was his fortune, like that of Eugene of Savoy, to see war for the first time as it was conducted by the arms of Islam. In the summer of 1839 the Egyptian army of Ibrahim Pacha was set in motion, and, having reached Aleppo, it threatened to advance, through the passes of the Taurus, into the northern provinces. Two Turkish armies were opposed to it, that of Hafiz Pacha in Western Kurdistan, that of Hadzchi Pacha, spread around Koniah, the Iconium of the age of Imperial Rome, but they were separated by vast and scarcely passable tracts, and Ibrahim might force his way between them, and possibly even defeat them in detail. To

avert this, Hafiz approached the verge of Syria, upon the Upper Euphrates, and placed his army in a camp round Biradchik, not far from the little stream of the Nisib. Moltke entreated the Pacha to take advantage of a circuitous movement made by Ibrahim, in order to turn his enemy's flank; but Hafiz failed to seize the occasion; and his adviser insisted that all that was now to be done was to fall back to the camp, from which the Turkish army had lately advanced. The Pacha, however, turned a deaf ear to the warnings of the soldier who, throughout the affair, had given proof of a true military eye; and, persuaded by the ignorant mollahs on the spot—the sachems of the superstitious Turk — persisted obstinately in maintaining his ground. Ibrahim[1] interposed between his adversary and his camp, attacked boldly on the 23rd of July, and easily won a complete victory, so decisive that the virtual independence of Egypt may be said to date from the day of Nisib. Moltke and his comrades escaped, with difficulty, through masses of fugitives in headlong rout; it is significant of the idea he had formed of the military worth of a Turkish army, that he thought it a positive gain that there were no means of retreat open from the camp of Hafiz, for this would "force the Osmanli to do or to die."

A series of "Letters on the East" records all that Moltke saw and did in these travels. This volume

[1] A French officer, Captain Hautpoul, curiously enough, urged Ibrahim to make this movement.

alone would entitle the author to some distinction in the sphere of literature; it abounds in thorough and well-digested knowledge, in cultivated thought, in true human sympathy. Professional studies fill many pages; and Moltke dwells on the natural strength of Constantinople as a seat of Empire, on the great capabilities of the Dardanelles for defence, on the value of the Balkans and the line of the Danube as barriers against an invading army. He explodes, we may note, what in those days was, perhaps, an article in the faith of British seamen; and insists that ships are no match for forts, as was seen at Sebastopol years afterwards. The book, however, is mainly one of travels, and few experiences of the East possess equal interest. In every chapter we find the accomplished scholar, the man of reflection, the master of language. A military search for the ruins of Troy recalls the immortal memories that cling around Ida, the Simois, and the land of Priam. The forms of buried empires rise out of the past, as Moltke threads his way between the great rivers that watered the realms of Belshazzar and Cyrus. Edessa, Nisibis, and other remains of the grandeur of Rome revive images of the Cæsars and their all-subduing armies; and the Kurd tillers of the soil and the wandering Arabs are seen through eyes that have loved the Sacred Writings. If somewhat wanting in imaginative power, the descriptions of scenery are well finished, and especially are rich in life and colour. We see Vienna before us, with its antique streets,

its gay public places, and its noble church overlooking the Marchfield and the mighty Danube. Bucharest rises brightly from the Wallachian flats, a human oasis in a desolate waste; the Balkan heights and the Bulgarian plains stand out with the Euxine in the far distance. But Constantinople is the most striking scene; and the animation of the West stirring along the Bosphorus, in strange contrast with the decaying grandeur of other parts of the Imperial City, and all the associations, of which the dome of St. Sophia may be deemed the centre, have never been more effectively portrayed. The work ends with a comparison between what has been achieved by the Czars and the Sultans during the last two centuries in the work of Empire. Here, however, Moltke has missed part of the truth; he is less successful with man than with Nature; he ought to have brought out more clearly the fact that the Russians are a great if a backward nation, and that the Turks are a mere degenerate horde.

In 1840 Moltke was again in Berlin; he attained the rank of major a short time afterwards, and he was placed on the staff of the 4th Corps d'armée, a passage in his career that was to prove of moment. He was now in the prime of full manhood; and a casual observer has given us a faint glimpse of a figure and bearing that have become historical. He describes Moltke "as thin and tall of stature, with a sharp, bronzed face, and with lips that seldom opened, grave, taciturn, and self-contained;" and

this description evidently has been a model for French writers, who, in the bitterness of their hearts, have compared his aspect in old age to that "of a vulture, lean and silent, as it devours its prey." Yet if we may judge from authentic portraits, Moltke was at this time a handsome man, blue-eyed, fair-haired, and refined in look; and though he was not in any sense talkative, and he never wore his heart on his sleeve, he was a delightful companion to those who knew him well. The mother he loved had now passed away; she was to be soon followed by his surviving parent; and his brothers and sisters were settled in life, two of the brothers, Adolf and Ludwig, referred to before, having made their mark in the Civil Service of the debateable lands of Schleswig and Holstein. In 1842 Moltke made the acquaintance of Mary Burt, the daughter of an English gentleman, whose second wife had been one of Moltke's sisters; and the acquaintance led to a most happy union. Marie, as he always called her, was the fitting helpmeet of the hard-working and ambitious soldier; she appreciated his lofty and strong character; and he was deeply, nay, passionately, attached to her. What she was appears in these few words, witten by her husband to one of his family[1]: "My little wife is my greatest joy. In five years I have rarely seen her sad, and never cross. She has no vagaries, and allows of none in other people. But no one should do her a real wrong, for, with the best will in the

[1] "Letters," vol. i. p. 177.

world, she could not forgive it; with all her light-heartedness, she has a decided, strong, and deep nature, which she would assert under all adverse circumstances. God preserve her from such. But I know what I possess in her." After twenty-six years of wedded happiness, this excellent and really superior woman was carried away before her time, but she lived to see all Prussia do homage to her lord, as he returned a conqueror from Sadowa to Berlin. A simple monument raised to her memory at the home of Moltke's last honoured years, contains this epitaph from his thoughtful pen : " Love is the fulfilment of the law of God."

About the time of his marriage Moltke published his[1] History of the War between the Russians and Turks in 1828 and 1829. Unlike the bulky volumes compiled by the Prussian Staff, which chronicle the great conflicts of late years, but only bear slight marks of his hand, this work is entirely from his pen, and it is alike interesting and, in some respects, curious. A strong imagination was not one of Moltke's gifts, but he seems always to have thought that this creative faculty was out of place in describing war, and the book has no traces of the animation and beauty repeatedly seen in the "Letters on the East." The narrative is sedate and without colour, though the subject abounds in

[1] This book is entitled, "The Russians in Bulgaria and Roumelia in 1828 and 1829." A translation of it into English appeared in 1854, during the Crimean War. Moltke was even then so little known in Europe that the translator asserted he was dead.

dramatic scenes; the storming of Ibrail is tame and lifeless compared to Napier's sketch of the storming of Badajoz; the passage of the Danube and that of the Balkans do not awake one spark of poetic fire, and the account of the sieges of the Turkish strongholds is little more than the diary of an engineer. But the criticism of the operations of the contending armies is very able, and valuable in the extreme; and this is the more remarkable because Moltke, unlike Napoleon, is not given to military criticism and comments on war. The mistakes made by the Russian commanders in crossing the Danube with too weak a force, and especially in waiting whole weeks around Shumla, and the incapacity of the Turkish Pachas, are clearly and completely set forth, and full justice is done to the powers of Diebitsch, and, above all, to his boldness in pressing forward to Adrianople with the wreck of an army, wasted by forced marches, want, and disease. Yet the most striking characteristic of the work is the attention the author bestows on the mechanism of war, on the nature and composition of the hostile forces, and on the preparations made for their movements in the field. Moltke dwells with emphasis on the frightful losses sustained by the Russians through sheer neglect, and he significantly points out how ill-adapted the troops in many respects were to cope with the difficulties of a campaign in Bulgaria. A master of organization is more apparent throughout the volume than a master of war.

Though remaining attached to the staff of his

corps, Moltke was appointed aide-de-camp to Prince Henry of Prussia—a brother of the monarch who succumbed at Jena—and was with his chief in Rome in the autumn of 1845. The Prince was a dying invalid, and Moltke and his wife had ample leisure to see the Eternal City and its departed glories. Characteristically he thoroughly studied Niehbuhr, and extracted fruit from those hard, dry husks; but his sound judgment rebelled against the destructive scepticism of the historian, and he continued to believe in Egeria and Numa. A short work on Italy appeared from his pen, but it does not require special notice; it scarcely alludes to the Italian Question, already beginning to stir the Continent, and it relates chiefly to Rome and Italian scenery. One passage, however, in Moltke's letters,[1] which dwells on all that he saw and felt from the dome of St. Peter's, is a good specimen of his peculiar descriptive skill; the associations of the past are well blended in a thoughtful picture with the present landscape. A short journey through Spain, made after the death of Prince Henry, closed this chapter of travels, and it is interesting to show that, as the reflecting soldier notes how "German colonists in Spain and other lands forget their fallen nationality and its ties," he gives proof of a yearning for German unity. In 1847 Moltke, now become a colonel, was again at his work with the 4th Corps, and,[2] strangely enough, he had thoughts of leaving the army, at the very time when the tide of fortune was

[1] "Letters," vol. ii. p. 160. [2] Ibid. vol. i. p. 177.

near. This resolve was, possibly, in part due to the mutterings of the revolutionary storm already beginning to be heard in Germany. Moltke had the political faith of a Prussian noble; he detested Liberalism and all its ways; and, if he wished to see Germany rise from her weakness, he felt nothing but scorn for German democracy. When 1848 swept over the Continent, and "shriekers in Frankfort" were trying to erect a new Germany on the wrecks of princedoms and thrones, and anarchy had revelled in the streets of Berlin, it seemed to Moltke as if the end of all things was near, and he[1] contemplated, for a moment, quitting the Old World and making a home for those he loved in the New, if his sword was not immediately required for his country's service.

Events, however, turned Moltke aside from what was probably but a fleeting purpose. He was made Chief of the Staff of his Corps towards the close of 1848, an honour to which he had long aspired, and which he had thought the extreme range of his highest ambition. His was now really the directing mind of a small army complete in itself, and his ability, his industry, his attention to details, felt through the whole sphere of regimental work, soon raised the 4th Corps to marked eminence.[2] "Such troops, if Frederick the Great had only had them," he wrote of his men, with honourable pride; and it may be remarked that, though strict in the extreme, he was popular with the young staff officers.

[1] "Letters," vol. i. p. 181. [2] Ibid. vol. i. p. 228.

He was stationed at Magdeburg during the next few years, and for some time he was engaged in repressing the irregular risings and mob violence in which the movement of 1848 had ended, a duty sternly but discreetly performed, and not in the spirit of Dalzell or Claverhouse. As usual, too, he devoted many hours to military duties at this period, and he gave considerable attention to the Crimean War, the last exhibition of the conduct and method of war in the first years of this century, eliminating genius and experience in the field. These passages, however, were not the most important in this part of Moltke's career. The Crown Prince—the King and Emperor who was to be—was Commander-in-Chief of the 4th Corps, and this true soldier, who had the high faculty of discovering and esteeming superior men, had appreciated the merits of the Chief of his Staff. The Prince and Moltke became fast friends, and seldom, indeed, have two minds been united by ties of such close sympathy. The Crown Prince had the wrongs of his mother to avenge—the ill-fated Louise of Jena and Tilsit—and cordially hated all that was French, and Moltke felt towards France as a Prussian soldier, and had described her as the[1] disturber of Europe. Both, too, had a fixed, if undefined, notion that Prussia ought to be the head of a united Germany, and that this object was to be attained through the army; both resented the weakness, the folly, the license, which had been so disastrous in

[1] "Letters," vol. i. p. 78.

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1848; both believed that "heroes would take the place of spouters"—a pregnant and significant phrase of Moltke—and both bitterly felt the disgrace of Olmütz, the subjection of Prussia to the will of Austria, in 1851-2, and the sorry attitude of Prussia during the Crimean War.[1]

The reputation of Moltke, in the words of Horace, "grew like the hidden growth of a tree." He did not become a general until 1856, when verging on the decline of manhood, an age when most commanders have done their work. Through the influence, doubtless, of the Crown Prince, he was made an aide-de-camp of his son Frederick—the late and deeply-regretted Emperor—and he went with his chief once more on his travels. He was present at the marriage of the Princess Royal, but he has scarcely referred to what he saw in England, though, like Bugeaud, he admired the British infantry, and, like Bugeaud, probably thought them a handful of men. A collection of letters from his pen, to his wife, describes a visit to Russia in 1856, and though full of details of Court life and gossip, is, nevertheless, of some lasting interest. St. Petersburg did not strike Moltke, but he was deeply moved by the sight of Moscow—that city of the East on the border of the West, oriental in type, yet, above all, Christian—and from the summit of the Kremlin he looks back at the days when the plain

[1] The views and opinions of the Crown Prince on these subjects are well known. For those of Moltke, see "Letters," vol. i. pp. 188, 189, 193, 217, 228, &c.

swarmed with the horsemen of the Golden Horde, and the affrighted Muscovite shrank behind ramparts thrown up to resist the conquering Tartar. Curiously enough, he only alludes in one passage to the great invasion of the West in 1812; and he complacently gazes on hundreds of French cannon, captured in the long and awful retreat. The Russian army made a strong impression on his mind; that armed assemblage of many races and tongues from the Caucasus to the Baltic and Caspian brings vividly before him the power of the Czars; and he dwells with marked approbation on the well-ordered lines and steadiness of the masses of the Russian troops, characteristic of a nature which made discipline and obedience the first of a soldier's qualities. Soon after this time he was with the Prince in Paris, but his record of his experiences is brief and trivial. The splendour of the Tuileries and the gay magnificence of the City on the Seine delight and amaze him; and we seem to be in the presence of a great martial Goth, who, dimly conscious that the hour of his race is at hand, passes through the Rome of Decius and Gallus. Of the French army he says very little, but anything he says is by no means in its favour. He had called the Empire[1] a "magnificent swindle," and he sees plainly that Cæsarism without a Cæsar—Napoleon III. in the seat of Napoleon—democracy, faction, routine, and tradition had injured the military institutions of France. At a time when the French

[1] "Letters," vol. i. p. 231.

army was deemed a model for all the great Continental armies, Moltke criticized sharply the loose indiscipline and irregular marching of French troops; and to a mind like his, which placed order before liberty, the intelligence and agility of the French soldier were not rated at their true worth.[1] Moltke was to show that he did not comprehend the essential aptitude for war of the illustrious race which has been the wonder and terror, more than once, of Europe.

The hour of deserved advancement, deferred for years, was, at last, to come for the man of thought and action, remarkable alike for strength of mind and of character. Frederick William of Prussia was learned and enlightened, but he had been, in the main, a bad ruler; he had missed his opportunity in 1848, had rejected the Crown offered by the German people, and had been false and infirm of purpose; he had let Prussia sink into a third-rate power, and had allowed the Prussian army greatly to decline. His intellect gave way in 1857, and the Crown Prince, his brother, the friend of Moltke, having become Regent and ere long King, addressed himself to the task of raising the Monarchy and the State from its fallen position. King William, we have seen, had a kind of notion that Prussia should be at the head of the German nation; he detested the policy of his predecessor, and he clearly saw that the military power of

[1] "Le Maréchal Moltke," par. xxx. 107-8. This work is by a French General Officer.

Prussia must be greatly increased if she was to work out her apparent destiny. Conservative, simple-minded, and above all a Prussian soldier, intent on Prussian interests, it was some time before he lent an ear to the audacious and crafty counsels of Bismarck, and thought of reaching the goal of German unity by seconding "with blood and iron," and without doubt or scruple, a movement partly revolutionary, and in part national. But he resolved from the first to reform the Prussian army, and to make it what it had ceased to be, a formidable and efficient instrument of war. As early as 1858, and years before Bismarck became Minister, the late Commander of the 4th Corps appointed Moltke Chief of the General Staff, that is, gave him the supreme direction of military affairs. Roon, the Minister of War, soon became his colleague, and the complete reorganization of the armed strength of Prussia was steadily taken in hand.

CHAPTER II.

Sketch of the history of the Prussian army—The army of Frederick the Great—That of 1813-14—The Reforms of 1815—The results—Reorganization of the army in 1859-60—Great improvements effected by the King, Roon, and Moltke—Special work of Moltke in the staff and the army—Formidable power of the army after 1860—The Danish War—The war of 1866—Political situation of the belligerent powers—Austria and Prussia stand on the defensive—The offensive projects of Moltke frustrated—Assembly of the Prussian armies on the frontiers of Saxony and Silesia—Assembly of the Austrian army in Moravia—Characteristics of that army—The Prussians invade Saxony and Bohemia—Advance of the Austrians into Bohemia—The projects of General Benedek—He loses a great opportunity—Defeat of the Austrians in a series of combats and battles—Benedek retreats behind the Bistritz.

THOUGH the youngest army of the great powers of Europe, the Prussian army has known many strange vicissitudes. It owed its existence to the Great Elector, a contemporary and opponent of Turenne; it had been made a powerful and well-trained force by soldiers brought up in the school of Marlborough; it became a most formidable organization for war in the vigorous hands of Frederick the Great. It had, nevertheless, many essential defects, though these were scarcely apparent when it was led by a commander, if not of the very first order, far superior to the commanders of his

time.[1] It was largely recruited from mere mercenaries; it had hundreds of foreign officers in its ranks; it was subjected to a barbarous discipline, and badly supplied in many particulars; its superiors were drawn from a caste of nobles, who had a kind of property in the troops they mustered; and if the fire of its infantry was in the highest degree excellent, and its cavalry was a mighty arm, its formations, though much the best of its day, were, nevertheless, somewhat stiff and cumbrous.

The army rapidly declined after the death of Frederick; and its essential vices became but too manifest, when it went down in 1806-7, before the soldiery of Revolutionary France, commanded by the greatest of captains, enthusiastic, flexible, and well-handled by officers largely promoted for merit; when desertion carried away all its alien elements, and when, in a word, it was reduced to impotence. The army of Frederick, in fact, disappeared; but Prussia, a martial people, remained; and in the hour of subjugation and defeat, her military chiefs undertook the task of creating a new army out of the ruins of the old. This was a most dangerous and difficult work, for the Conqueror of Jena had insisted that the Prussian army should, in no case, exceed 42,000 men; and the policy of Napoleon, in fact, was to keep it in a state of mere vassalage to himself. A man of genius, however, and the spirit

[1] Among many other authorities, "The Memoirs of General Marbot," Tome i. 286-7, contain interesting details on the subject. See also *The Edinburgh Review* for January, 1892.

of the race contrived to baffle the will of the all-powerful despot. Scharnhorst, made the minister of war of Prussia, afraid of the jealous Lord of the Continent, kept the standing army within the limited strength, as regards the troops in actual service; but he passed through the ranks and partly trained tens of thousands of youths in rapid succession; and these, fired with patriotism and apt for war, were admirably fitted to become good soldiers, and formed elements of great military power. Other reforms lessened and even removed the most glaring defects of the old army; and, as the result, the army of Scharnhorst expanded suddenly in 1813 to a force of more than 200,000 men, superior to that of its allies in Saxony. The marvellous rising of Germany did the rest; volunteers, burning to avenge their country, flocked in multitudes to the Prussian standards; and such was the enthusiasm of the wronged nation, that Prussia was able to raise a powerful militia, ever since known by the name of Landwehr. What these formidable arrays achieved in the field, was seen in many a hard-fought struggle from the banks of the Elbe to those of the Seine, and especially on the crowning day of Waterloo.

The military institutions of Prussia, however, were not permitted to rest permanently on the patriotic levies of 1813; their bases were laid two years afterwards; for it is characteristic of Prussia that she establishes her organization for war in peace. The general main lines on which the

armed strength of the nation has ever since been built up were not finally marked out until 1815. By these arrangements, it was provided that every Prussian subject is bound to military service as his duty to the State; and in theory, this principle has been steadily retained. In practice, however, a yearly contingent of not more than 40,000 men was sent into the ranks of the army, a succession of these contingents yielding the elements which made up the national forces. The standing army was composed of about 200,000 men, liable, in the first instance, to serve for three years, and then drafted into a reserve in which they were to serve for two; and they next passed into the reserve of the Landwehr, which, divided into two main bodies, could furnish perhaps 300,000 men, for the most part beyond the age of youth. The army, constituted in this way, was organized on a local territorial system; that is, it was formed into corps d'armée, each belonging to a separate part of the monarchy, and being a unit distinct in itself; this corresponding to immemorial tendencies and traditions of the Teutonic race, which [1] Cæsar and Tacitus inform us, went to war in tribes. The Landstürm, a kind of universal levy, to be called out only in the event of invasion, formed the last defensive force of the State.

This organization gave Prussia an army of half a million of men, including the Landwehr but not

[1] Cæsar, De Bello Gallico, cap. 51; Tacitus, De Moribus Germaniæ, cap. 7.

the Landsturm, an irregular and extraordinary force. But if the army was large in numbers and appeared powerful, the system, on which it rested, had many defects, and it became a very inferior instrument of war. The yearly contingent remained 40,000 strong; but, as the population of the State increased, it ought to have been enlarged in proportion; and many thousands of men, who might well have served, were never summoned to join the colours. The term of service, too, in the standing army was, especially for the reserve, short; it could not exceed five years in the whole and, in fact, it was often reduced to four. The most faulty side of the system, however, was exhibited in the Landwehr as a military force. It had been assumed that this great reserve would always give proof of the high martial qualities it showed in 1813-14, and would yield the army regularly an ample supply of trained, mature, and thoroughly loyal soldiers. But what was possible in a general national rising, was not to be expected in ordinary times; and the Landwehr, composed of men in middle life with settled occupations and, for the most part, married, became a bad and unsound element for feeding and sustaining the standing army. The Prussian army, in fact, became divided into an assemblage of troops, comparatively weak in numbers and not sufficiently trained, and a collection of men disinclined to serve and discontented whenever called out. It fell far short of its normal strength, and was below the standard of other armies of the time; and this, no

doubt, was the real cause of the surrender of Olmütz in 1850, and of the vacillation of Prussia during the Crimean War.

King William, we have seen, had resolved to bring the Prussian army out of this state of decline, and had selected Moltke and Roon to aid him in the task. The work of reform began in 1859-60, and was carried out with admirable skill and forethought. The principles of the arrangements of 1815 were not changed in a marked degree; that is, military service continued to be the possible obligation of all Prussians, and the army remained arrayed on the local system, with the exception of the *corps d'élite* of the Guard. But the yearly contingent of recruits was raised from 40,000 to 63,000 men, thus taking in a quota that ought to have served, and lessening what had become a grievance; and the time of service was extended from five to seven years, four years being the term in the reserve. The Landwehr was at the same time made a wholly separate force from the standing army, and it became less one of its component parts, than a supplement available when an occasion required. In this way, when the reform was complete, the standing army was increased in numbers from 200,000 to more than 400,000 men, and its military value was perhaps quadrupled, owing to the enlargement of the time of service, and its organization apart from the Landwehr. Simultaneously, large supplies of material of all kinds were laid in and stored, and the military strength of

Prussia was increased from 500,000 to more than 700,000 men, taking the Landwehr but not the Landsturm into account. The real augmentation of power, however, was in the change effected in the standing army, which had been transformed from a weak, untrustworthy force into a really formidable and efficient array. Yet such is the force of routine and tradition that this extraordinary growth of the armed strength of Prussia did not attract much attention at the time, even among the military states of the continent.

The King and Roon had the principal part in increasing the strength of the Prussian army; but Moltke was their fellow-worker, and gave excellent advice. The staff, however, of which he had been made the chief, was his special province, and wholly his own, and it soon felt the effects of a master's hand. The Prussian staff, in the form it still retains, was a result of the partition of powers made between Blücher, a hero indeed, but a soldier only, unlettered and rude, and Gneisenau, an able and scientific officer; its chief was held to be the responsible counsellor of the general in command in the field; and it was at once permanent, and had much independence. It had had two chiefs of a high order, Müffling, a companion-in-arms of Wellington in the decisive campaign of 1815, who had done much to promote learning and professional studies of all kinds; and Krauseneck, the real author, perhaps, of the great manœuvres in peace of the Prussian army, if Frederick the Great had a share

in the honour. Moltke added to the number of his subordinates, superintended their education with incessant care, and spared no pains in selecting the officers; and, in a word, steadily laboured to make the Prussian staff, what it has been aptly called, the Brain of the Army, the source and centre of its intellectual force. The complete instruction of the staff officer was naturally, indeed, an ideal sought by one who excelled in the learning of war; and the Staff College, ultimately under Moltke's auspices, developed into the great "Academy of War," a military university of the best kind. In two main particulars, the new Chief of the Staff made the efficiency of his department much greater than it had been at any previous time. Moltke accumulated information, exact and minute, on the military resources of every state in Europe, for he had always an eye to the possible events of war; and these statistics have proved of the highest value. Knowing, too, how important is the study of the military art from recorded facts—the only means, indeed, through which it can be understood—he inaugurated the practice of compiling histories of the most memorable campaigns of the day, which has been a special task of the Prussian staff: and the first of the series, an account of the campaign of 1859, in Italy, is wholly, it is believed, from his pen. This admirable sketch is of a much higher order than the elaborate descriptions of the great wars of 1866 and 1870—the composition of inferior men on the staff, which, as we have said, are too

voluminous, are overloaded with petty details, and contain scarcely any striking comments; and it is singularly characteristic of the mind of the author. Moltke is more of a critic than is his wont; he dwells on the irresolute slowness of Gyulai, at the outset of the war; and he approves on the whole of the well-known march, by which Napoleon III. turned the Austrian right, "because he could trust in his army and its superior strength," although he admits it was "hazardous in the extreme." But, as usual, he addresses himself chiefly to the arrangements made by both sides for war, and to the general conduct of the armies in the field. He points out essential defects in the military organization of France and Austria; he dilates on the fatal effects of divided councils in the Austrian camp, and of the value of unity in advice and command; and, spite of apparent signs to the contrary, he insists that precision of fire must prevail over the most brilliant charges in modern battles.

Moltke, however, was more than a Chief of the Staff, taking the expression even in its widest import. Napoleon reduced Berthier to the position of a clerk; King William, conscious of Moltke's powers, made him virtually the head of the whole Prussian army. It was under his direction that this mighty instrument was gradually fashioned, and made effective to answer the uses of modern war, and what he achieved must be rapidly glanced at. It was Moltke's great and peculiar excellence that he thoroughly understood, and turned to the best

advantage, the new conditions of war evolved in his time, as Turenne, intent on his wars of marches, had increased the infantry in the armies of Lous XIV., as Napoleon, pre-eminent in quickness of movement, drew immense consequences from the progress of husbandry, and from the multiplication and improvement of roads, which had taken place since the days of Frederick.

During the era of peace that came after Waterloo, conservatism and routine prevailed, as a rule, in the War Offices of every Power in Europe. In England, Wellington obstinately clung to the traditions of the Peninsular War; Soult, in France, followed the ways of the Empire, but weakened the military strength of the State; Austria and Russia carried out the ideas of the Archduke Charles, of Diebitsch and Paskevitch; and the wars that were waged at the close of this period, were all conducted upon the methods established in the age of Napoleon. Yet during this time, and the succeeding years, mighty forces and influences were making themselves felt, which were largely to change the order of Europe, and to affect, most deeply, the operations of war. The population of all nations greatly increased; education had reached the masses, and had been widely diffused; and the rude elements, therefore, of military power had become more ample than they had ever been while the intelligence and self-reliance of the classes, which form the chief material of armies, had been developed beyond all previous experience. Agri-

culture, too, had made a rapid advance, the lines of ordinary roads had been much extended; the system of railways had spread through all lands, and had added immensely to the facilities of locomotion already existing; and these prodigious changes had made it possible, that armies should possess a power and an ease of movement never before witnessed. The age, besides, was one of material knowledge, rifled cannon and the breech-loading musket had been invented, and were partly used; and this formidable mechanism was destined to modify the order of battles and the whole art of tactics. And ere long, we should add, the great Civil War of America, showed on a vast scale what modern discoveries could effect in war; it proved the uses of the electric telegraph, of the steam engine, and of appliances of the kind; and, generally speaking, it made manifest the value of the new inventions in operations in the field.

Moltke's distinctive merit, we repeat, was that he saw through these facts, and all that resulted from them, more clearly than most of the soldiers of the day, who either did not thoroughly grasp the truth, or stood on the old ways, behind the time. The Prussian army, through his assiduous efforts, was gradually adjusted to the new conditions. The later campaigns of Napoleon had shown that armies had become too large even for his master-hand; how would it be when growing population would expand the armies of the existing age into far ampler proportions? To avert this grave inconvenience

Moltke arranged that the Prussian army should be divided into separate and distinct armies, each powerful but of manageable size, when it had become necessary to take the field; and he especially insisted, while maintaining the importance of unity in supreme command, that the chiefs of the different armies must enjoy a freedom of action and an independence which Napoleon's marshals never possessed. The progress of education again had increased the natural powers of the individual man; and Moltke drew excellent results from this, by taking advantage of intelligence and skill, and, notably, by making the troops and their officers feel a real sense of personal duty, and by uniting them in a gradation of well-planned services, so that the whole army presented the image of that connected series of defined relations to which the first[1] of historians ascribed the secret of the success of Sparta in war. As regards the improvement in the means of communication which was taking place, Prussia had given special attention to railways; and Moltke laid down careful and excellent rules to secure that her railways and other roads should be readily available for the conveyance of troops, and for the transport of the material of war, in order that the assembly of her military forces and their movements should be made as rapid as possible. Moltke, we have seen, had perceived that the power of fire-arms would be the decisive element in modern battles; and certainly he carefully studied

[1] Thucydides.

the effects which rifled guns and breech-loaders would produce.[1] His conclusions, however, on these subjects appear to have been somewhat slowly formed; and experience alone perhaps convinced him, that having regard to the tremendous force of the new artillery and small arms, the dense formations and the compact lines of the days of his youth must be abandoned. From the American war, in which he was thoroughly versed, he drew information of much value as to the use of the electric telegraph in the field.

The Prussian army, greatly enlarged in numbers, though not so perfect as it became afterwards, was made, through these means, a most formidable array, well arranged, well ordered, easily handled, and capable of being quickly drawn together and moved. It was already far the first of the armies of Europe; and it should be added that the Prussian foot-soldier was armed with the breech-loading needle-gun, a weapon not employed in any other service, and as superior to the rifle charged from the muzzle, as the long bow of Crecy was to the Genoese cross-bow. Not only, too, it appears probable, was Moltke the principal constructor of this mighty force, he had, perhaps, a voice in appointing to the chief commands in it. It is certain, at least, that at this time, the Prussian generals were able men; and this exactly carried out a maxim,[2] on

[1] See "A Tactical Retrospect" and a "Retrospect of the Tactical Retrospect," the first work by a very able soldier, Captain May, the second by Moltke.

[2] "Campaign of Italy in 1859," p. 8.

which he has more than once insisted, that if captains of the first order are seen only at wide intervals of time, good commanders can always be made forthcoming. Be this, however, as it may, the Prussian army under his care had the immense advantage of direction of a superior kind, as well as of an organization wholly unequalled; and this was another element that made it supreme. Finally —and this should be carefully borne in mind—this vast combination of military force was prepared and equipped with a special view to the method of warfare which, Moltke knew,[1] has proved to be in every age the best. Versed thoroughly in the history of war, bold, capable and firm in the extreme of purpose, he perfectly understood the immense value of the initiative in operations in the field; and he had made it the end of his unceasing efforts that the Prussian army should be always ready to take the offensive at the briefest notice, and to fall in force on an enemy at once. The local territorial system, it should be observed, in itself strongly promoted his object.

The great instrument of power which Moltke had fashioned, was soon tried, if not really tested. It would be superfluous to notice the Danish war, a conflict between a petty state and two of the leading Powers of the Continent, the issue of which was never doubtful. It is disputed, indeed,[2] to what

[1] "Faites la Guerre offensive," Napoleon.

[2] See Von Sybel, "History of the Foundation of the German Empire," and "Field-Marshal Von Moltke," by Von Fircks, both

extent Moltke planned or directed the Prussian movements; superiority in command certainly does not appear in the repulse at Missünde, or in the elaborate efforts made against the redoubts of Düppel. In two particulars, however, the war was important with reference to events in the near future. Moltke was present during the invasion of Jutland; and he had ample opportunity to examine, on the spot, the working of the military system of Austria, and to lay to heart all that was defective in it. The Austrian chiefs, on the other hand, full of the memories of Novara and Olmütz, seem to have held the army of their allies cheap, and especially disregarded the destructive effect of the formidable weapons of the Prussian infantry.

The military power of Prussia was made clearly manifest, for the first time, in the great war she waged against Austria and the German Confederation in 1866. On the causes of the conflict we cannot dwell; they were broadly due to the long-standing rivalry of Austria and Prussia, as German powers, and especially to Bismarck's ambitious policy, yet we cannot avoid a passing glance at the political situation evolved at the time, for it largely controlled the events of the war, and it explains much that, otherwise, would be obscure. The German nation was strongly against a struggle, which it condemned as fratricidal and unwise; and the King of Prussia, if eager to enlarge the monarchy, and even

cited by "Charles Malo," the *nom de plume* of a distinguished soldier, and military critic, in his sketch of Moltke.

zealous in the cause of German unity, had resolved if possible to maintain a defensive attitude, and not to be the first to draw the sword. On the other hand, Austria dreaded a rupture; she, too, felt the force of German opinion; she knew that Italy was a deadly enemy; she was sinking under financial distress, and she trembled for the safety of her ill-compacted Empire. Besides, Austria and Prussia were both afraid of the probable armed intervention of France, and thus the military counsels of both states were strongly affected by the hesitation and delays, to be ascribed to a halting and somewhat timid policy. Bismarck was the one statesman who distinctly saw his way.

These circumstances must be steadily kept in view in following the operations of the war of 1866, which have been the subject of a great amount of criticism. On the side of Prussia, Moltke laid down the general lines of the plans of the campaign, and certainly the resolve to oppose a weak force only to the ill-prepared levies of the Confederate States, and to concentrate the great mass of the Prussian army against Austria, the only dangerous foe, shows much firmness of purpose and the clearest insight. The measures, however, taken to cope with Austria were, apparently, far from equally wise, and, indeed, they can be understood only, at the outset at least, by bearing in mind the considerations before referred to. Austria had begun to arm towards the close of March; hostilities seemed about to open, though there had

been no actual declaration of war; and Moltke, there is some reason to believe, wished to assemble at once the main Prussian armies, to bring them together around Görlitz and the adjoining Lusatian plains; and having covered the approaches to the heart of Prussia, especially the great cities of Berlin and Breslau, to be ready to advance across the Bohemian frontier, following, probably, a single line of invasion. The king, however, would not hear of such a course as this; he deferred the assembly of the Prussian armies for weeks, as he was anxious not to take the offensive; and, as on the assumption that he would stand on the defensive only, they could not find the means of subsistence were they kept together long within a contracted space, it became necessary to give up a project, at once daring and well conceived. The strategy of Moltke was, in fact, baffled in this respect by his master's scruples.[1]

The preparations of Austria went steadily on, while those of Prussia were long delayed, and it was not until nearly the middle of May that the real assembly of the Prussian forces began. By this time, however, the occasion had been lost of concentrating the great mass of the Prussian army around Görlitz or any other given point. In view of the situation it had become perhaps necessary to gather together, as quickly as possible, and by

[1] These conclusions may, we think, be drawn from a careful study of the "Prussian Staff History of the War of 1866," chapter ii. See especially 21-29. English translation.

every means of communication on the spot, the different parts of the armed strength of Prussia; this involved their distribution at wide distances, and, besides, the insuperable difficulty of supplies would increase should an attempt be made to unite them closely, and the king should maintain an attitude of defence. Moltke's arrangements were made to meet a position of affairs in which he was circumscribed and restricted, and if their strategic merit admits of question, they show how admirable had been his organizing powers. Of the nine[1] corps d'armée, which made up the army, eight and a half were opposed to Austria; these great masses of men, about 260,000 strong, and all their vast material of war, drawn together from their different local centres, were moved towards Saxony and into Silesia by the numerous roads and railways spreading throughout Prussia; and the celerity and precision of this great movement, accomplished in the space of three weeks only, astonished, nay, even alarmed Europe. Three large armies were now formed; the first, composed of one corps and a half, to be soon joined by a powerful reserve, and given the name of the Army of the Elbe; the second, known as the First Army, for the moment comprising three corps, with two more not far in the rear; and the third, designated as the Second Army; and the huge arrays, divided into three groups, were extended upon an immense line, from Torgau on the Elbe to Waldenburg and Landshut,

[1] Including the Guards.

where the Giant Hills mark out the Bohemian frontier. The Army of the Elbe was in the hands of Herwarth Bittenfield, a general of proved experience and worth; the First and Second were led by Prince Frederick Charles and the Crown Prince, the eldest son of the king, both true to the martial traditions of their House.

This wide dissemination of the Prussian forces, had Moltke's assumptions been correct, would certainly have been extremely hazardous,[1] for he believed that a large part of the Austrian army was collected at this time in Bohemia, prepared to join hands with its Saxon allies, and a few days, nay, hours, might bring forth war. From what we have seen, however, he had but little choice, though possibly he had advanced the armies too near to Bohemia, with a view to the bold offensive he had in his mind; and in judging his strategy, we must, we repeat, remember the situation that had been made for him. All apprehensions and dangers of the kind were, nevertheless, without foundation, owing to the disposition made of the forces of Austria. That Power, we have seen, was averse to war; the Emperor, like the King of Prussia, was disinclined to begin hostilities, and if Austria armed long before Prussia, this was caused by a belief, which was perfectly true, that she did not possess the means of assembling her armies as rapidly as

[1] "Prussian Staff History," p. 25. The writer admits, p. 18, that the "intelligence was very defective" concerning the Austrian movements.

her well-prepared rival. Her project for a campaign was strictly defensive; the staff[1] prepared an elaborate plan of operations with this object only; and while Prussia was drawing near the Bohemia passes, by far the greater part of the Austrian army was collected in Moravia, around Brünn and Olmütz, one corps alone being in Bohemia. The attack, therefore, which Moltke thought not improbable, and which most soldiers in Europe believed would be made, on the widely divided Prussian armies, was not possible, and was not even designed.

It was not until the 11th of June that the positions of the main body of the Austrian army became certainly known in the Prussian camp. Silesia seemed threatened by an advance from Olmütz, and, in order to guard against this danger, a new direction was given to the Prussian armies, political considerations in this respect, too,[2] being, not improbably, without influence. The Second Army was strengthened by the Guards and the 1st Corps, the two divisions which had been intended to form a part of the First Army; and the Crown Prince moved to the tracts round the Neisse, where the river descends from its source to the Oder. The Army of the Elbe was left in its former position, but the First Army was drawn towards

[1] "Austrian Staff History," translated into French, and called "Les Luttes de l'Autriche, vol. i. p. 79.

[2] Austria was believed to be, and perhaps was, hankering after Silesia. See "Fyffe's History of Modern Europe," vol. iii. p. 367.

the Second, extending from Niesky and Görlitz to Reichenbach and Lowenburg, along the verge of the Giant Hills; the defence of Silesia, it is evident, being the immediate object of these movements, but with a view to the offensive, should an occasion offer. War broke out on the 15th of June; there "was no more talk about defensive flank marches"[1] in the Prussian councils, and the king consented at last to take the offensive, yielding probably to the advice of Moltke and Bismarck, who had given his voice for decisive operations from the first.

At this juncture the three Prussian armies were spread along a front of about 130 miles, from the Middle Elbe to the Upper Neisse; and offensive operations being designed, two courses only, perhaps, were open to Moltke. He might draw his forces together, within a more contracted space, behind the range of the Bohemian hills, on the verge of Saxony and in Silesia, and might then move into Bohemia and Saxony, making the invasion on a single line only. But, apart from other objections to an operation of the kind, this strategy would involve considerable delay; and, as the result, the Austrian army would have ample time to march into Bohemia, and, uniting with its Saxon supports, to fight a great battle, fully concentrated, in one of the strong positions, chosen by itself, which abound to the south of the mountain barrier. The alternative was to advance, at once, with the

[1] "Prussian Staff History," p. 30. The tone of impatience at previous delays cannot be mistaken.

three armies from where they stood; to enter Saxony and Bohemia with these, on double, but converging lines of invasion; and to unite the armies, as quickly as possible, at a point south of the great Bohemian ranges, in the hope that they would forestall the enemy, and join before he could prevent their junction. This operation, however, involved the drawing together of large masses, divided by wide distances, and separated by obstacles of all kinds, hill ranges, mountain passes, and rivers, and the assembling them in a hostile country, where the Austrians might be collected in force—a contingency by no means improbable; and from the days of Turenne to those of Lee, movements of the kind have repeatedly proved disastrous, especially when an adversary is bold and skilful.

Moltke instantly adopted the second course, though it is idle to suppose that he did not weigh the hazards, or was unaware of the undoubted dangers. He remained at Berlin to direct the great offensive movement, the electric telegraph giving him the means of communicating with the chiefs of the armies, and perhaps of lessening the risk of the converging march; and he assigned Gitschin, a well-known spot, between the Upper Iser and the Upper Elbe, as the point where the junction was to be made. Operations now began along the immense front still occupied by the three Prussian armies. The Army of the Elbe, 70,000 strong, with its reserve, entered Saxony on the 16th of June; was in possession of Dresden by the 18th; and

having sent detachments to its left was in communication with the First Army on the 19th and 20th; the two armies being now placed under the chief command of Prince Frederick Charles, though their principal divisions remained apart. The Prince had invaded Bohemia by the 22nd and 23rd, the First Army, under his immediate orders, being about 93,000 men; the Army of the Elbe, reduced to perhaps 60,000—for it had been necessary to leave some divisions in Saxony—advanced, on the right, in a parallel line; and the two masses more than 150,000 men, had reached Reichenberg and Gabel by the 25th, still a long march from the line of the Iser, where the Austrians had a part of their army.

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the great field of manœuvre, the Crown Prince had advanced from the Neisse with the Second Army, about 115,000 strong; and having made skilful demonstrations to his left, in order to feign an attack on Olmütz, he directed the chief part of his forces towards the passes which lead into Bohemia, through long defiles, ending at Trautenau and Nachod. On the 25th, however, when Prince Frederick Charles had already approached the course of the Iser, the Crown Prince was still on the Bohemian frontier; and thus the three armies, though drawing towards each other, were fully seventy or eighty miles apart, and divided by a difficult and intricate country. Was it probable—for five or six days were required even if they had scarcely to fire a shot—that they would be

able to meet near, or round Gitschin, before their enemy would stand in force between them? And in considering these operations it deserves special notice that, at this moment, the exact positions of the Austrian army were not known.[1]

While the Prussian armies were thus on the march, a broad and dangerous gap being still between them, the Austrian army had begun to move. The chief mass of that army, we have seen, had been placed around Brünn and Olmütz, and it was in these positions on the 11th of June, but it broke up from its camp a few days afterwards. Before reviewing its operations a word must be said on the nature and characteristics of this imposing force, which, with the corps in Bohemia and its Saxon allies, was not less than 270,000 strong; that is, nearly equal in numbers to the three Prussian armies, including the detachment left behind in Saxony. As an instrument of war it was not to be compared to the well-organized and efficient arrays, composed, too, of soldiers of one nation, which it was about to meet in the field. The cavalry, indeed, formed an excellent arm, and the artillery was better, perhaps, than the Prussian, but the infantry, the backbone of an army,[2] was, as it has always been, of inferior quality. The tactics of the

[1] "Prussian Staff History," 62.

[2] "La mauvaise infanterie Autrichienne," Napoleon. A striking instance of the bad quality of the Austrian infantry is to be found in General Marbot's Memoirs, vol. iii. p. 273. See also *Edinburgh Review*, April, 1892.

Austrians, too, were radically unsound; they were based on the principle that determined charges would get the better of effective fire; the troops were marshalled in too close formations, and, above all, they were armed with the muzzle-loading rifle, and did not possess the deadly needle-gun. Nor were the Austrian commanders to be even named with their able and thoroughly trained antagonists. The general-in-chief, Benedek, was a stout soldier, of the school of Daun, famous in Austrian history; but he had no capacity for the higher parts of war; and he was unfortunately matched against such a man as Moltke. Few of his subordinates, too, were capable men; and the staff, though numbering some good officers, was rather behind the requirements of the age. If we add—most important, perhaps, of all—that the Austrian army was largely made up of troops of different races, which disliked their rulers, we shall see how unfit it was to cope with its enemy.

Benedek, who had been given a free hand, had reached Olmütz in the first days of June, and his purpose seems to have been to take the offensive, and to abandon the defensive projects of the Austrian staff. He wished, however, not to begin hostilities until the contingents of the Confederate Powers were, in some measure, ready to afford him aid; and, in any event, his intention was not to take the field until the 20th of June. Nevertheless, having been[1] apprised by the telegraph that war

[1] "Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. p. 10.

had been declared on the 15th, and that it was of great importance to move at once, he set his army in motion on the 17th of June; his object being to enter Bohemia, and to find a favourable opportunity to attack the enemy. By this time the Saxon army, about 25,000 strong, had retreated before the Prussian invasion; and ere long it had joined the single Austrian corps which, we have seen, had been in Bohemia for weeks. Benedek ordered the chiefs of the united bodies, from 55,000 to 60,000 men, to stand firmly on the Upper Iser, between Jung Bunzlau and Munchengrätz, and to make head against the advancing Prussians; and with the remaining six corps of his army, considerably more than 200,000 men, he broke up from around Brünn and Olmütz, directing the troops by parallel roads and much of his material along the lines of railway which reach Bomisch Trübau from these places, and formed a single line as they approached the Elbe. The object of these operations was to attain the table-land between the Iser and the Elbe, which, protected to the east by the two fortresses of Josephstadt and Koniggrätz, extends westward to near Jung Bunzlau and Munchengrätz, a region rendered memorable in 1778 by the successful resistance made by Loudon and Lacy to all the efforts of Frederick the Great. Holding this tract in force, Benedek hoped to be able to interpose between the hostile armies, to attack, and to defeat them in detail; and his intention was to direct his efforts, first against the army of Prince Frederick

Charles, and having fallen on this in superior strength, to turn against the army of the Crown Prince, and to strike it down as it emerged from the passes of Bohemia in very inferior numbers. This plan was perfectly right in principle, and had it been carried out the Austrian chief would have held a central position between divided foes, and interior lines on the scene of the contest; he would, in fact, have had the same points of vantage as Napoleon possessed in 1796, when army after army succumbed to his strokes, in operations still perhaps unrivalled, as his enemies converged in double and separate lines towards his formidable lair, round Mantua and the Adige.

Had Benedek been a great captain, had he made use of the ordinary means employed to keep back an enemy on the march, and had his army been thoroughly prepared, he probably would have attained his end. The telegraph had kept him aware of the Prussian movements,[1] especially of those of the Crown Prince; he had to traverse a distance of about a hundred miles only, going back even to his corps in the rear; and he might, with proper arrangements, have reached the positions he had in view, by the 28th or 29th of June, interposing between the hostile armies, who should have been retarded on their way. But he gave no orders to Clam Gallas,[2] the leader of his corps on

[1] "Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. p. 25.

[2] Clam Gallas, however, ought to have taken these measures of his own accord, and without waiting for command from his

the Iser, or to the Crown Prince, the chief of the Saxon forces, to break up roads, to destroy railways, or generally to impede the advance of the enemy; he directed them only to stand on the Iser; and,[1] especially, he did not push forward troops to occupy the Bohemian passes, to obstruct, and to bar the defiles, and so to check the Crown Prince's columns, as they moved from the Silesian frontier. His movements too, were unsteady and slow; the soldiers were harassed by conflicting orders; the arrangements for procuring supplies were defective; and, in short, his army was feebly directed, and was unable to march with anything like celerity.

superior. That he did not, shows the difference in capacity and intelligence between the Austrian and Prussian generals. See "Great Campaigns," by Major C. Adams, p. 445—an able work, but somewhat deficient in accuracy, and too much of an apology for Benedek.

[1] This is well pointed out by the Austrian staff, which has fairly described the position of affairs, and what ought to have been done at this critical juncture: "Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. p. 15. "Si au lieu d'attendre jusqu'au dernier moment en avait fait partir, par exemple, les 4e et 8e corps un ou deux jours plustôt; si le 2e corps stationné á Landskron, qui était le plus rapproché de Josephstadt, avait commencé le mouvement, au lieu de le fermer, la concentration de l'armée autour de cette ville eût été effectuée quelques jours plustôt. Si, enfin, on avait envoyé rapidement en Bohême, par le chemin de fer, quelques brigades d'infanterie avec la mission d'observer et de rendre impracticables les défilés de la frontière prussienne, en eût, sinon empêché, au moins retardé le débouché des colonnes de la 11e armée, ce qui eût permis de diriger la plupart des corps autrichiens contre l'armée du prince Frédéric Charles, et de l'écraser par des forces supérieures. Ces différentes mesures de précaution étaient parfaitement indiquées."

As the general result, the Austrian army had not approached the positions sought by its chief—the table-land between the Iser and the Elbe—until it was, perhaps, too late; and as the march of the Prussians had not been thwarted by precautions even of the most obvious kind, Prince Frederick Charles, we have seen, had drawn near the Iser, ready to advance, by the 25th of June, the Crown Prince, however, being still distant. In these circumstances, the Austrian leader—though this has been the subject of much controversy—ought, we think, to have abandoned his project; he was still four or five marches, at the rate of his movements, from the points he had intended to hold; and if he made an attempt to occupy these, he ran the risk of being wedged in, between the foes converging against him, and of meeting the fate of Napoleon at Leipzig. Yet, though he had been baffled to this extent, one of the best opportunities ever presented to a real general was now offered to him. By the 26th of June, the great mass of his forces was concentrated, on either bank of the Elbe, round Josephstadt, Königgrätz, Opocno, and Tynist, and at a short distance from the Bohemian frontier; and, if Prince Frederick Charles was close to the Iser, the Crown Prince had not even entered the passes, which lead from Silesia into Bohemia, his army too being widely scattered, and extended upon a very broad front. Had Benedek, therefore, who, we repeat, had been kept informed of the enemy's movements, drawn in

his corps from the Iser one march only, and directed the principal part of his army towards Trautenau and Nachod, where the defiles nearly end, and meet the Bohemian plains, he would have opposed[1] an overwhelming force to any the Crown Prince could bring against him, and might perhaps have gained important success. In that event he would have had ample time to turn in full strength against Prince Frederick Charles, and to attack him with largely superior numbers. He was already, in fact, in the central position, which it had been, from the first, his object to gain, and in possession of interior lines; and, had he known how to turn this advantage to account, we shall

[1] This is well indicated by the Austrian staff. "Luttes de Autriche," vol. iii. p. 49: "De l'ensemble de tous ces rapports il était aisé de conclure dans la soirée du 26, que la 11e armée prussienne netarderait pas à entrer en Bohême, et qu'elle s'avancait en trois colonnes fort éloignées les unes des autres. D'un autre côté, il est incontestable qu'il était non seulement possible, mais facile d'opposer à l'ennemi: d'abord le 4e corps . . . . . puis le 10e corps . . . . . en troisième lieu, le 6e corps . . . . . ensuite les 3e et 8e corps . . . . . enfin le 2e corps et la 2e division de cavalerie légère." The "Prussian Staff History" practically arrives at the same conclusion, and the following is probably from the hand of Moltke himself: "Now that all is over, anyone may say that the best plan would have been to have fallen with all force on the 11 Army debouching from the mountains." The writer, however, expresses a belief that the march of the Crown Prince was not known to Benedek, but this is positively denied by the Austrian staff, which was in possession of the facts, p. 48. Major Adams adopts the view that Benedek was not aware of the movements of the Crown Prince, but significantly observes, p. 415: "Had Benedek known what the Crown Prince was about to undertake, he might have punished him."

not say, so inferior his army was, that he would have completely beaten his enemy, but probably he would have made the invasion collapse.

Unhappily for Austria the chief she had chosen had none of the gifts of a great commander. To make effective use of a central position, such as that which Benedek actually had, and of the interior lines on which he was placed, requires promptitude, decision, boldness, insight, and especially power to seize the occasion; and Benedek did not possess these qualities. A gallant soldier, he was no strategist; and if tenacious and stubborn in a high degree, he was obstinate, very slow of perception, and essentially a man of fixed ideas, who will not recede from a settled purpose. Though the opportunity had, we are convinced, been lost, he persisted in carrying out his original design, and in endeavouring to place his army on the table-land between the Iser and the Elbe, in the hope of striking Prince Frederick Charles; and as he did not interpret the facts correctly, he committed himself to a whole series of false, erroneous, and disastrous movements. Instead of drawing Clam Gallas and the Saxons towards himself, he left them isolated on the Iser, a much stronger enemy being already at hand; and, instead of concentrating, as he might have done, a very superior force against the Crown Prince, he turned aside the corps, which would have served his purpose, believing that he could attack Prince Frederick Charles with effect. At the same time, having been made aware that the Crown

Prince was advancing in force, and was approaching the Bohemian passes, he sent a detachment to hold him in check; but this consisted of two corps only, inadequate to resist a whole army. Clam Gallas and the Saxons thus remained exposed to the First Army and the Army of Elbe; the great mass of the Austrian army was directed to positions which it could not reach in time to paralyze Prince Frederick Charles, and was diverted from the enemy it might have beaten, the Second Army of the Crown Prince; and a fraction only of Benedek's forces was marched against the Crown Prince with his 115,000 men.[1] The distribution, in a word, of the Austrian army was fatally erroneous at every point; weak bodies were opposed, on either wing, to enemies immensely greater in strength; and the main force, in the centre, was engaged, far from its supports, in a hopeless task. In these circumstances all the advantage of its central position and interior lines was thrown away, and had even become a peril.

The results of Benedek's false operations were soon developed with astounding quickness. Clam Gallas was attacked on the 26th of June by the

[1] "Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. p. 26: "Dans les derniers jours, au moment decisif, alors qu'il n'y avait pas une heure à perdre, le commandant-en-chef ordonne, d'un côté au prince royal de Saxe une chose impossible; se tenir sur l'Iser contre des forces très supérieures; et, de l'autre, il envoie des corps, isolés se faire battre successivement, et isolément sur la rive gauche de l'Elbe. Ces mesures devaient necessairement avoir des conséquences desastreuses, car elles detruisirent et la cohésion et le moral de l'armée."

First Army, and driven across the Iser; and the blow was followed by blows in rapid succession. The Prussians had crossed the Iser by the 27th; and Prince Frederick Charles, turning away from Gitschin—the point where the armies were to meet[1] —conduct which has exposed him to some censure—fell in force, at Munchengrätz, on the 28th, on the combined Austrian and Saxon corps, and defeated them with considerable loss. The Prince now made for Gitschin, and again routed his enemy completely on the 29th, Clam Gallas and the Saxons falling back towards the main Austrian army, in a precipitate retreat. Through these engagements, the advanced columns of the First Army and of the Army of the Elbe had reached the appointed place of junction; and the isolated wing of the Austrian army had been cruelly stricken and half destroyed, the main body, still at a great distance, not being able to give it support.

Meantime, on the opposite scene of the conflict, the Crown Prince had got through the defiles of the hills, making for Trautenau and Nachod by the roads, which traverse the passes into Bohemia, and the results to Austria had been even more disastrous. One of the two corps, indeed, which had been sent by Benedek to check the progress of the Crown Prince, defeated and drove back a Prussian corps at Trautenau, on the 27th of June; but this repulse was avenged by the Prussian Guards, who routed their enemy, at Soor, on the 28th. Simultaneously the

[1] "Great Campaigns," p. 410.

other Austrian corps had been shattered to pieces, at Nachod, on the 27th; and a third corps, hurried up to afford it aid, and misdirected in every way, was involved at Skalitz in a terrible defeat. The second wing of the Austrian army, divided from the main body, like the first, and, like it, too weak to resist the enemy, had been driven in, and almost crushed; and Benedek, with the mass of his forces, unable to reach his adversaries at any point, and to strike a single blow with effect, stood impotent in the centre, looking on, so to speak, at the annihilation of powerful arrays, which, if properly directed, might have accomplished much.

In this series of conflicts the Austrians lost from 30,000 to 40,000 men, the Prussians probably not 10,000. The result was due, in the first instance, to the fatal mistakes made by the Austrian chief, who not only let a grand opportunity slip, but, in his subsequent operations, did almost everything which ought not to have been done, as affairs stood. What indeed can be said to excuse a commander, who, in the presence of enemies gathering round him, exposes the forces he had detached to be beaten in detail, and persists in making the mass of his army powerless, but that he was the counterpart of the unskilful boxer, who, in the words of the Greek orator, was always too late to stop his adversary's blows? Yet other and potent causes concurred to make the defeats of the Austrians so complete and disastrous. The Austrian generals did not act well in concert, and Benedek had much

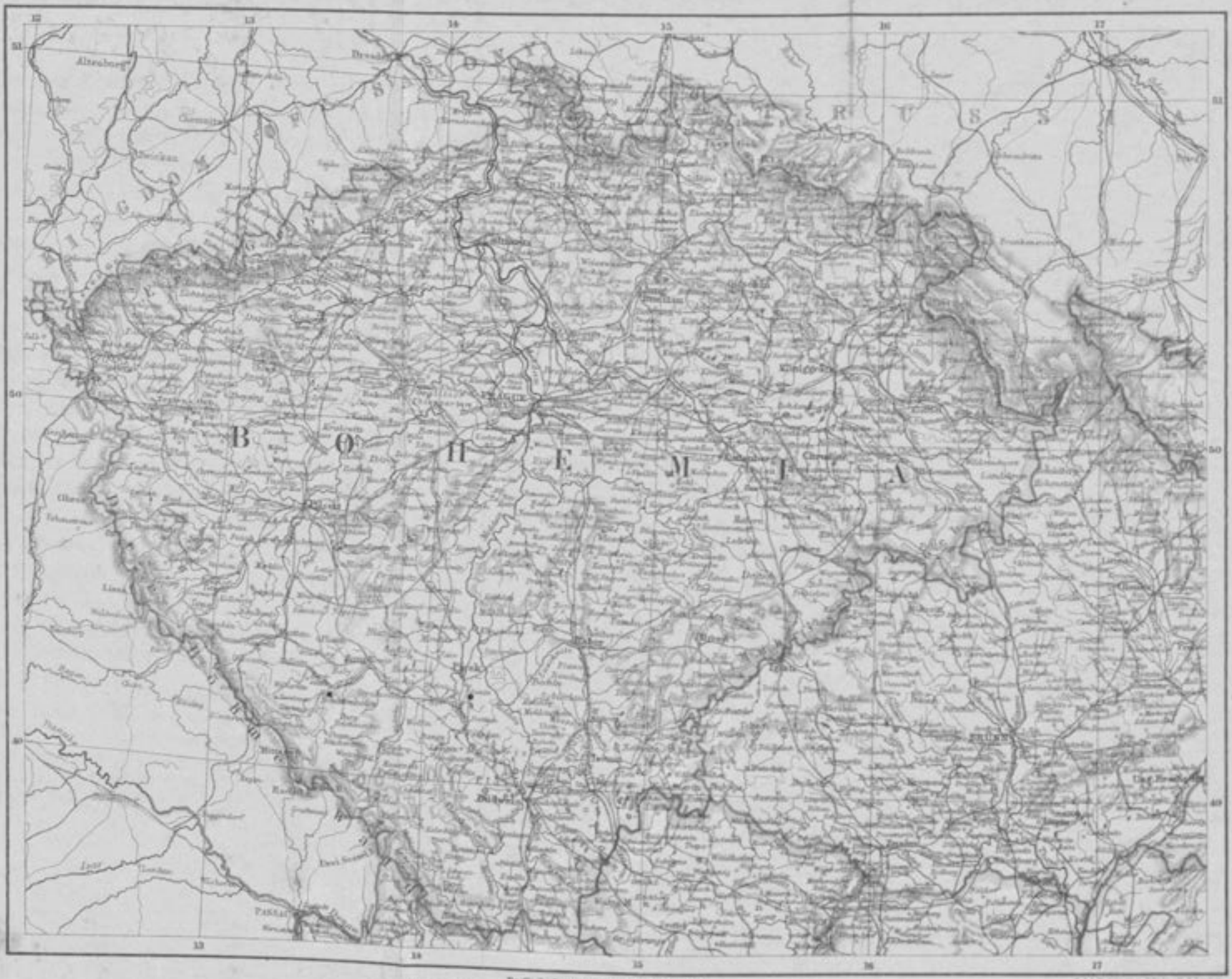
reason to complain of more than one of his lieutenants in command, especially on the Iser, and after Nachod. The Austrian soldiery, too, in vain endeavoured to oppose the bayonet charge to the fire of the Prussians, and they literally withered away under the destructive effects of a weapon to which they had little to oppose. It should be added that they had been taught by their officers to despise their enemy, and when they discovered what the Prussians were in the field, false confidence was replaced by abject despair, and they easily broke up into hordes of fugitives. An immense number, besides, of unwounded prisoners fell into the hands of the victorious Prussians, and this distinctly shows that a large part of the army, that composed of Hungarian and Slavonic elements, not to speak of the rebellious Italians,[1] had no heart in the cause of the Empire. As for the conduct of the Prussian commanders, Prince Frederick Charles has been blamed for not making for Gitschin at once, and his movements were by no means rapid. But the Crown Prince gave proof of remarkable skill in these operations from first to last, and it may generally be said that the Prussian chiefs admirably carried out a very difficult plan; co-operated heartily with each other, and showed

[1] Soldiers, however disloyal their nationality may be, will usually be true to their standards, as long as success attends them. But soldiers of this kind always show their natural tendencies in the hour of defeat. The Germans, who followed Napoleon in 1807, 9, 10, rose against him in 1812 13.

that they had that sense of duty and that readiness to act and think for themselves, which were due in some measure, doubtless, to Moltke's training. The Prussian army was as superior to the Austrian in organization and military worth, as its infantry was in destructive fire, and this difference alone was almost decisive.

The successive defeats of the hostile corps, sent against him in inadequate strength, and ending in the terrible reverse at Skalitz, had enabled the Crown Prince to march into Bohemia, and to advance in triumph to the Upper Elbe. Ere long Moltke and King William had hastened from Berlin to the theatre of war, and the Prussian armies were directed by Moltke on the spot. So complete was the prostration of the Austrian army that the Crown Prince could, without difficulty, have joined Prince Frederick Charles at Gitschin, and the united armies might have borne down on the enemy in irresistible strength. Moltke, however, deliberately kept the Prussian armies apart at a distance of more than twenty miles; this, he believed, would give them more freedom of action, and Benedek[1] had perhaps no longer the power to thrust himself between them. By the 30th of June, Prince Frederick Charles and the Crown Prince were advancing, in separate masses, to the Elbe, and the beaten Austrian army, its wings shattered, and its centre sharing the contagion of defeat, was falling back in confused fragments, which, however, had nearly effected their junction.

[1] "Prussian Staff History," 157.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Kaspisches Tiefland
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Persischer Golf
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Nil
Sinai-Halbinsel
Mekka
Medina
Jerusalem
Damaskus
Beirut
Tripolis
Aleppo
Euphrat
Tigris
Bagdad
Basra
Mossul
Ninive
Babylon
Teheran
Ispahan
Schiras
Buschir
Hormuz-Strasse
Maskat
Aden
Sanaa
Hodeida
Mokka
Dschidda
Suakin
Massaua
Abessinien
Somali-Land
Golf von Aden
Rothes Meer
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Dongola
Khartum
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Kordofan
Darfur
Wadai
Tschad-See
Bornu
Sahara
Libysche Wüste
Fezzan
Ghadames
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Ovambo-Land
Kalahari
Groß-Namaqua-Land
Klein-Namaqua-Land
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Transvaal
Natal
Kapland
Kap der Guten Hoffnung
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Majunga
Diego Suarez
Nossi-Be
Mauritius
Port Louis
Réunion
St. Denis
Comoren
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Colombo
Galle
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Bombay
Surat
Ahmedabad
Baroda
Indore
Gwalior
Agra
Delhi
Lahore
Amritsar
Multan
Peshawar
Kabul
Afghanistan
Beludschistan
Kandahar
Quetta
Sind
Karachi
Hyderabad
Indus
Pandschab
Rajputana
Jodhpur
Udaipur
Jaipur
Ajmir
Bikaner
Jaisalmir
Kathiawar
Cutch
Cutch-Golf
Golf von Cambay
Nerbudda
Tapti
Godavari
Krishna
Kistna
Dekkan
Nilgiri-Gebirge
Madras
Pondicherry
Karikal
Tranquebar
Cuddalore
Negapatam
Trichinopoly
Madura
Tinnevelly
Palk-Straße
Golf von Manaar
Adam's Brücke
Vorder-Indien
Hinter-Indien
Birma
Rangun
Mandalay
Irawadi
Pegu
Martaban
Tenasserim
Siam
Bangkok
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Malakka
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Sumbawa
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Halmahera
Banda-Inseln
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Deutsch Neu-Guinea
Kaiser Wilhelms-Land
Bismarck-Archipel
Neu-Pommern
Neu-Mecklenburg
Neu-Hannover
Neu-Irland
Admiralitäts-Inseln
Salomons-Inseln
Bougainville
Buka
Choiseul
Ysabel
Guadalcanar
Malaita
San Cristoval
Santa Cruz
Neu-Hebriden
Espiritu Santo
Malekula
Efate
Tanna
Aneityum
Neu-Caledonien
Noumea
Loyalty-Inseln
Lifu
Uea
Mare
Fidschi-Inseln
Viti Levu
Suva
Vanua Levu
Taveuni
Lakemba
Rotuma
Tonga-Inseln
Tongatabu
Nukualofa
Haapai
Vavau
Niuafu
Samoa-Inseln
Upolu
Apia
Savaii
Manua
Tutuila
Pago Pago
Rose-Insel
Swains-Insel
Ellice-Inseln
Funafuti
Nanumea
Nanumanga
Niutao
Nui
Vaitupu
Nukufetau
Nukulaelae
Gilbert-Inseln
Apaiang
Tarawa
Maiana
Makin
Butaritari
Marshall-Inseln
Jaluit
Mili
Arno
Majuro
Wotje
Ebon
Kusaie
Ponape
Ruk
Mortlock-Inseln
Nukuoro
Kapingamarangi
Marianen
Guam
Agana
Rota
Tinian
Saipan
Pagan
Agrigan
Asuncion
Sarigan
Anatahan
Farallon de Medinilla
Volcano-Inseln
Iwo
Bonin-Inseln
Peel-Insel
Parry-Insel
Hogolu
Beechey-Insel
Coffin-Insel
Baker-Insel
Howland-Insel
Phönix-Inseln
Enderbury
Canton
Hull-Insel
Sydney
Gardner-Insel
Malden-Insel
Starbuck-Insel
Penrhyn-Insel
Manihiki
Rakahanga
Pukapuka
Nassau-Insel
Suwarrow
Palmerston-Insel
Cook-Inseln
Rarotonga
Mangaia
Atiu
Mauke
Mitiaro
Aitutaki
Manuae
Hervey-Inseln
Gesellschafts-Inseln
Tahiti
Papeete
Moorea
Maiao
Huahine
Raiatea
Tahaa
Bora-Bora
Maupiti
Tubuai-Inseln
Rurutu
Tubuai
Rimatara
Austral-Inseln
Raivavae
Rapa
Pitcairn-Insel
Oeno-Insel
Ducie-Insel
Paumotu-Archipel
Gambier-Inseln
Mangareva
Marquesas-Inseln
Nukahiva
Uapou
Hivaoa
Tahuata
Fatuhiva
Ua Huka
Ua Pou
Osterinsel
Hanga Roa
Sala y Gomez
Juan Fernandez
Robinson Crusoe
Alexander Selkirk
Valparaiso
Santiago
Chile
Atacama-Wüste
Antofagasta
Iquique
Arica
Tacna
Peru
Lima
Callao
Chincha-Inseln
Huacho
Pisco
Ica
Nasca
Arequipa
Mollendo
Islay
Titicaca-See
Puno
Cuzco
Ucayali
Amazonas
Iquitos
Pará
Manaos
Rio Negro
Rio Branco
Boa Vista
Venezuela
Caracas
La Guayra
Puerto Cabello
Maracaibo
Coro
Barquisimeto
Valencia
Orinoco
Ciudad Bolivar
Angostura
Trinidad
Port of Spain
San Fernando
Tobago
Scarborough
Kleine Antillen
Grenada
St. Georges
Carriacou
Grenadinen
St. Vincent
Kingstown
Bequia
Mustique
Union
St. Lucia
Castries
Martinique
Fort de France
St. Pierre
Dominica
Roseau
Portsmouth
Guadeloupe
Basse-Terre
Pointe-à-Pitre
Les Saintes
Marie Galante
Désirade
Montserrat
Plymouth
Antigua
St. John's
English Harbour
Barbuda
Redonda
St. Kitts
Basseterre
Nevis
Charlestown
Saba
Bottom
St. Eustatius
Oranjestad
St. Martin
Philipsburg
Marigot
Anguilla
The Valley
Virgin-Inseln
Tortola
Road Town
Virgin Gorda
Spanish Town
Anegada
Jost van Dyke
St. Thomas
Charlotte Amalie
St. John
Coral Bay
St. Croix
Christiansted
Frederiksted
Puerto Rico
San Juan
Ponce
Mayaguez
Aguadilla
Arecibo
Caguas
Fajardo
Vieques
Culebra
Mona
Desecheo
Monito
Hispaniola
Haiti
Port-au-Prince
Gonaïves
Cap Haïtien
Jacmel
Les Cayes
Jérémie
Môle St. Nicolas
Gonâve
Tortuga
La Tortue
Navassa
Dominikanische Republik
Santo Domingo
Puerto Plata
Monte Cristi
Azua
Barahona
Samaná
Sabana de la Mar
La Romana
Seibo
Higüey
Saona
Beata
Alta Vela
Jamaica
Kingston
Port Royal
Spanish Town
Montego Bay
Port Antonio
Morant Point
Blue Mountains
Caymanen
Grand Cayman
Georgetown
Cayman Brac
Little Cayman
Swan-Inseln
Cayos de Perlas
Mosquito-Küste
Bluefields
Corn Islands
Great Corn Island
Little Corn Island
Nicaragua
Managua
Granada
Rivas
Nicaragua-See
San Juan del Sur
Corinto
Chinandega
León
Realejo
Fonseca-Bai
Honduras
Tegucigalpa
Amapala
Comayagua
Puerto Cortez
Omoa
Trujillo
Roatan
Bonacca
Utila
Guanaja
Swan-Inseln
Cayos de Perlas
Mosquito-Küste
Bluefields
Corn Islands
Great Corn Island
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Nicaragua
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San Juan del Sur
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Tegucigalpa
Amapala
Comayagua
Puerto Cortez
Omoa
Trujillo
Roatan
Bonacca
Utila
Guanaja
Guatemala
Guatemala City
Quezaltenango
Retalhuleu
Escuintla
Amatitlan
Antigua
Chimaltenango
Totonicapan
Huehuetenango
Quiché
Salamá
Cobán
Izabal
Livingston
Petén
Flores
Peten-Itza-See
Belize
Belize
Stann Creek
Punta Gorda
Corozal
Orange Walk
Yucatan
Mérida
Campeche
Progreso
Sisal
Isla Mujeres
Cozumel
Tulum
Chichen Itza
Uxmal
Palenque
Tabasco
Frontera
Laguna de Términos
Carmen
Tuxtla
Chiapas
Tapachula
Soconusco
Mexiko
Mexico City
Puebla
Cholula
Orizaba
Jalapa
Veracruz
Tampico
Tuxpan
Tecolutla
Alvarado
Coatzacoalcos
Minatitlan
Salina Cruz
Tehuantepec
Golf von Tehuantepec
Acapulco
Chilpancingo
Iguala
Taxco
Cuernavaca
Toluca
Morelia
Uruapan
Zamora
Lerma
Chapala-See
Guadalajara
Colima
Manzanillo
Tepic
San Blas
Mazatlan
Culiacan
Durango
Zacatecas
Fresnillo
Guanajuato
San Miguel de Allende
Celaya
Irapuato
Salamanca
Querétaro
San Luis Potosí
Tampico
Matamoros
Monterrey
Saltillo
Parras
Torreon
Chihuahua
Ciudad Juarez
El Paso
Rio Grande
Rio Bravo del Norte
Rio Conchos
Rio Grande del Norte
Rio Nazas
Rio Aguanaval
Rio Lerma
Rio Santiago
Rio Balsas
Rio Papaloapan
Rio Coatzacoalcos
Rio Grijalva
Rio Usumacinta
Golf von Mexiko
Golf von Campeche
Golf von Californien
Niederkalifornien
La Paz
Cabo San Lucas
Magdalena-Bai
Cedros
Guadalupe
Mexikanisches Hochland
Sierra Madre
Sierra Madre Occidental
Sierra Madre Oriental
Sierra Madre del Sur
Sierra Nevada
Popocatepetl
Ixtaccihuatl
Pico de Orizaba
Colima
Nevado de Toluca
Mexikanische Wüste
Chihuahua-Wüste
Bolson de Mapimi
Bolson de Tularosa
Llano Estacado
Texas
Galveston
Houston
Austin
San Antonio
Corpus Christi
Brownsville
Matamoros
Rio Grande
Rio Bravo del Norte
Rio Pecos
Rio Colorado
Rio Brazos
Rio Trinidad
Rio Sabine
Rio Neches
Rio Nueces
Rio San Antonio
Rio Guadalupe
Golf von Mexiko
Golf von Texas
Golf von Galveston
Golf von Matagorda
Golf von Corpus Christi
Golf von Aransas
Golf von Espiritu Santo

It still stood between divided enemies, but apart from the question whether it had sufficient space to endeavour to strike at its foes in succession, it was so disheartened, injured and broken-down,[1] that an attempt of the kind would, perhaps, have been fatal. Nevertheless a gap remained open between the enemies in its front;[2] good judges have thought that the Austrian leader had still a last chance to strike with effect, and possibly a man of genius, like the youthful Bonaparte, who, before Arcola, was in a plight, apparently as desperate as that of Benedek, might, at the last hour, have plucked safety, nay success, from danger. But Benedek had neither inspiration nor resource; merely a tenacious soldier, his only thought was to make a determined stand, and to fight a defensive battle, in a strong position, for the honour of his master's arms, but with scarcely a hope of victory. Drawing in his shattered forces on all sides, with a steadiness and skill which has been justly praised, he retreated slowly behind the Bistritz, an affluent of the Upper Elbe; the veteran stood stubbornly here to bay.

[1] "Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. p. 163.

[2] Lecomte: "La Guerre de la Prusse et de l'Italie contre l'Autriche, et la Confédération Germanique," vol. i. pp. 365-6. This distinguished veteran was sometime the first aide-de-camp of Jomini, and is almost the last living link between the Napoleonic wars and those of this age. He is a scientific and admirable military critic.

CHAPTER III.

The Battle of Sadowa or Koniggrätz—Complete victory of the Prussian armies—Retreat of Benedek—The Prussians march to the Danube—The Treaty of Prague—Reflections on the conduct of the war, and especially on the strategy and tactics of Moltke and the Prussian leaders.

WHILE Benedek was retreating behind the Bistritz, the Prussian armies advanced slowly, scarcely pressing the beaten enemy, as he fell back. This was a marked feature of Moltke's strategy, very different from the conquering march of Napoleon, which we shall see over and over again, and contact with the Austrian army was lost. It was believed in the Prussian camp, on the 2nd July, that the Aus[illegible]ans had retired beyond the Elbe, and were in posi[illegible] resting on either flank, on the fortresses of Josephstadt and Koniggrätz, and Moltke's intention was to reconnoitre in force, and either to attack the enemy, where it was supposed he stood, or to turn his left wing by a march on Pardubitz. In the afternoon, however, it was ascertained that a considerable part of the Austrian army was at hand, having fallen back behind the Bistritz, but not the Elbe; and Prince Frederick Charles, with characteristic daring, determined to assail his foe at once, with the First Army, and that of the Elbe, which had been for some time nearly in line with him.

As, however, it might turn out that Benedek would be in largely superior force, the Prince sent a message to the Crown Prince now at Konighinhof —about twelve miles distant—for the Prussian armies had gradually approached each other, requesting the assistance of one corps at least; and the Chief of his Staff was dispatched to Gitschin, the general head-quarters of all the Prussian armies, to inform the King and Moltke of the intelligence that had been obtained, and of the purpose that had been already formed. Moltke's decision was marked by the boldness and insight which almost always marked his resolves in war. The project of Prince Frederick Charles was a half measure only, and Moltke sent a message to the Crown Prince to march at once, not with a single corps, to co-operate with his colleague as had been proposed, but drawing together the whole of his forces, to fall on the flank of Benedek on the right, and to overwhelm him with the three united armies. The order carried by a single officer,[1] immense as were the issues depending on it, was not, however, dispatched until midnight;[2] Konighinhof was more than twenty miles from Gitschin; the Second Army,

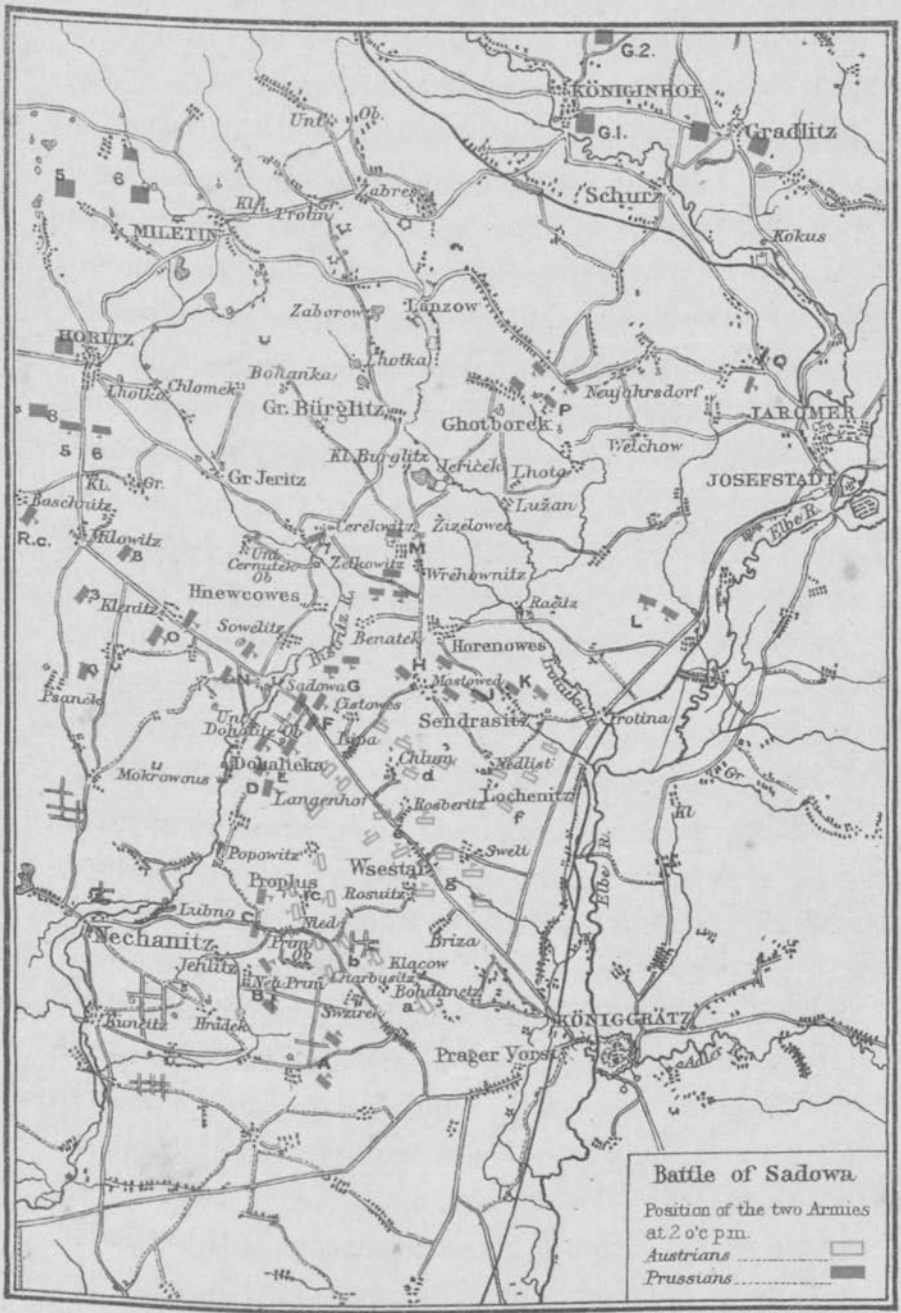
[1] To have sent this order by one messenger was a clear mistake, and it is surprising it was made by the Prussian staff. Mistakes of the kind, however, were repeatedly made by Berthier in the wars of Napoleon, and were twice made by Soult on occasions of supreme importance in the campaign of 1815.

[2] There was no telegraphic communication between the Prussian armies at this moment. See Hamley's "Operations of War," p. 213. Ed. 1889.

widely divided, was still, for the most part, beyond the Elbe, and at distances of from ten to twelve miles from the positions of Benedek near the Bistritz; the Elbe would have to be crossed to reach the enemy; and heavy rains and continued bad weather had broken up the roads, and flooded the plains. Was it probable, in the face of difficulties like these, that the Crown Prince would attain the field in time, and be able to complete the decisive movement, before his colleague, doubtless exposed to very superior forces, would have perhaps succumbed? Would the heir of Prussia achieve what had been achieved by Blücher, in his celebrated march from Wavre to Waterloo, or would he fail, like the Archduke John at Wagram, not to refer to many other instances, to reach the First Army until it was too late?

While the operations of the Prussians were being matured, Benedek was making preparations for a great defensive battle. The aspect of his stricken and desponding soldiery, as they defiled under his eye on their way to the Bistritz, had shaken for a time the resolve he had formed to await the enemy's attack in a strong position, and he had entreated the Emperor in a telegraphic message, an expression of a mind that had begun to despair, "to make peace in order to avert a catastrophe." By degrees however, his firmness, in part, returned; his master had bade him to fight stubbornly on; he had got rid of Clam Gallas[1] and other lieutenants, who had

[1] Clam Gallas is a name well known in the military annals of



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proved themselves to be incapable men; his troops, after a day of repose, had, in some measure, taken heart again, and he returned to his original design, to stand behind the Bistritz and to strike hard for Austria. Nevertheless he hesitated and lost precious hours; at a Council of War held on the 2nd July he did not utter a syllable to his subordinates to indicate[1] the decision he had formed, and it was far in the night before he declared his intentions, and gave orders for a great and decisive battle. This delay was in many respects unfortunate, if it had little to do, probably, with the final issue of events.

The note of preparation had sounded in the Austrian camp by the early dawn of the 3rd of July. The bivouacs were astir, with great masses of men seen dimly in the light of the dying watch-fires, and the sullen rumble of guns and trains in motion gave token of the impending conflict. The position in which Benedek was taking his stand may be briefly described as a huge oblong square, extending between the Elbe and the Bistritz, rising in the space between into ranges of uplands, here and there forming well-marked heights, and dotted all over with woods and hamlets. The Bistritz covered a large part of the Austrian front, dividing it from the First Army and the Army of the Elbe; the Trotinka, another feeder of the Elbe, ran along

Austria since the Thirty Years' War. The representative of the House, in 1866, had also done badly in Italy in 1859.

[1] "Les Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. pp. 174-5.

part of the Austrian right, in the direction of the army of the Crown Prince; the interval between the two streams was filled by eminences containing the points of Horenowes, Maslowed, and Cistowes; and the Elbe—bridged, however, at different places to afford an army the means of retreat—flowed behind the Austrian rear by Koniggrätz. Benedek's army, about 210,000 strong, including some 24,000 cavalry and 770 guns, and made up of eight corps, comprising the Saxons, was so placed as to fill nearly the whole square, which, in some respects, formed a good position of defence. On the left the Saxons, with the 8th corps in the rear, held the rising grounds round Problus in force, throwing detachments to the course of the Bistritz, at the village of Nechanitz and thence to Lubno. At the centre, occupied in great strength, spread the masses of the 10th and 3rd corps, with outposts advancing to the Bistritz, the main body gathering around the heights of Lipa, and especially of Chlum, this last commanding the whole scene around, and it guarded, besides, in imposing force, the broad main road, which, running from Koniggrätz, approached, near Sadowa, the enemy's vedettes and almost divided the Austrian lines. The right of Benedek was formed by the 4th and the 2nd corps, but owing to delays and obscure orders these parts of the army were thrown more forward than the Austrian leader had intended; they held Horenowes and part of the adjoining tract, between the Trotinka and the Bistritz; and the Austrian

right flank was protected by a small force only from the projected attack of the Crown Prince's army. The 6th and the 1st corps, and the great mass of the cavalry, were held towards the extreme rear, in reserve, extending from near Koniggrätz and touching the centre, and at different parts of the position, as a whole, a few earthworks had been hastily thrown up, in order to check the enemy's progress. The artillery was ranged in formidable tiers of guns at every favourable point of vantage, especially along the heights at the centre; trees were cut down and cleared to give play to its fire, and farmhouses and villages had here and there been fortified to strengthen and increase the means of defence.

The arrangements of Benedek, taken altogether, were in many particulars very defective. He must have known that the Crown Prince's army was menacing his right at no great distance, and that an attack from this side was possible, but he made no preparations to resist such an effort, and he left his right flank almost uncovered, even if his 4th and his 2nd corps had advanced further than he had originally designed. He evidently thought that he would have to cope only with the First Army and the Army of the Elbe, but, considering the situation even from this point of view, mistaken and deceptive as it was, his dispositions were far from judicious. His army was drawn up for a passive defence only, a system of tactics radically bad, and it was not arranged with skill and

intelligence upon this faulty and perilous system. The line of the Bistritz was not turned to account, though it formed in places a strong obstacle, for it was guarded by weak detachments only; the army was crowded into a relatively narrow space, where it had not sufficient freedom of action; the centre presented a convex front that exposed it terribly to a converging fire, and its masses were so huddled together that bold attacks might lead to confusion and ruin. The reserve, besides, was by far too large, and—a common defect in Austrian tactics—the cavalry, instead of covering the wings, and being enabled to exhibit its powers, was collected in the rear and almost paralyzed, except in the case of eventual defeat. The army, in a word, was ill-ordered, even for a purely defensive battle; but it is unnecessary to say—a truth proved by numberless examples in all ages—that it should have been so arranged as to possess the means of readily making counter attacks, and of taking the offensive in defending itself. And, above all, it must be borne in mind that nothing or nearly nothing was done to guard against the great force of the Crown Prince.

The three Prussian armies, should they once unite, would form a mass somewhat superior in numbers—200,000 footmen, perhaps, 30,000 horsemen, and about 790 guns—and infinitely superior in real force to the hostile army arrayed against them. The Crown Prince, however, was nearly a march distant, a river and a difficult country in his

way; the First Army and the Army of the Elbe did not exceed 124,000 men, with from 300 to 400 guns, and for hours this would be the only force to be opposed to an army nearly double in size. Yet Prince Frederick Charles did not hesitate to attack; and at about seven in the morning,[1] the 2nd and 4th corps of the First Army, the 3rd being in reserve, and almost the whole of the Army of the Elbe had drawn near the line of the Bistritz. The Austrian outposts and other detachments fell back before the advancing enemy, abandoning important points of vantage, and the stream was mastered after 8 a.m. by three divisions of the First Army. These troops boldly pressed forward against the Austrian main line, and, making some impression on the 10th and 3rd corps, gained ground in front of the enemy's centre, but they were crushed by the fire of the powerful batteries accumulated round the hostile position, which their weaker artillery could not subdue; and though there was not a thought of retreat, they were brought to a standstill and made no progress. Meanwhile, on their right the Army of the Elbe had been detained for hours in crossing the Bistritz, for though the Saxons did not defend the river, wide and flooded marshes spread around Nechanitz, and the passage was by a single defile; and here, too, the Prussian advance was arrested. And, on the opposite side,

[1] The "Prussian Staff History" reckons the First Army and the Army of the Elbe by divisions, but, for the sake of clearness in the narrative, we have adhered to the enumeration by corps.

to the Prussian left, the turn of events seemed even less prosperous. A single division of the First Army—the 7th, and its chief, Fransecky, deserve to be named—had achieved important success at first, and had nearly cut its way to the Austrian centre, but it was overwhelmed by the masses of guns on the spot, and by the efforts of the 4th and the 2nd Austrian corps, which drove it, struggling to the last, backward, and its position had become so critical that Prince Frederick Charles was compelled to send nearly his whole reserve to afford it support. It seemed probable, too, that even this addition of force would be unable to stem the advancing enemy, and to restore, at this point, the Prince's battle.

It was now past eleven, and the scales of Fortune appeared to incline against the two Prussian armies. The divisions in the centre barely held their ground, and were perishing under a destructive fire; the Army of the Elbe was kept back on the Bistritz, and the 7th division had almost succumbed. The superiority of numbers had, in fact, told; though not defended as they ought to have been, the approaches to the Austrian positions had been difficult to force; the Austrian artillery had done great things, and the needle-gun had been unable to produce its effects amidst the woodlands and other obstacles which covered large parts of the Austrian front. The Austrian army, in short, was as yet unshaken; more than one of Benedek's highest officers entreated him to assume the offen-

sive;[1] the project was seriously discussed round the commander-in-chief; and it will always remain[2] a grave question whether, at this crisis, a determined attack made by the mass of the 10th, the 3rd, the 4th, and the 2nd corps, against the thin and enfeebled Prussian centre, might not have been attended with success. Even if we conclude that in the presence of the enemies about to appear in the field, an effort of the kind would have ultimately failed, the First Army might have been driven back, and, in that event, the course of the battle would have probably taken a different turn. It is certain at least that serious alarm prevailed for a time in the Prussian camp; anxious eyes were turned to scan the horizon and to endeavour to descry the Crown Prince's columns, and officer after officer was despatched to the left to accelerate the advance of the Second Army. Time, however, passed, and there was no sign of the necessary and eagerly-hoped-for relief; and meanwhile a tempest of shot and shell was ravaging the dwindling Prussian ranks, and the enemy was thought to be preparing

[1] "Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. pp. 210-12.

[2] The "Prussian Staff History," pp. 205-6, admits that the 7th division "was in very great danger," but insists that a general Austrian attack would have been disastrous. The Austrian staff, "Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. p. 210, it is fair to add, concurs in this view. But see, on the other side, General Derrécagaix's "La Guerre Moderne," vol. ii. p. 269, a very able work. His words are significant: "Vers le milieu du jour l'avantage appartenait aux Autrichiens; il n'y avait plus qu'a prononcer un effort decisif, et le succès semblait certain."

a grand attack. Yet Moltke's confidence was never disturbed, his combinations he felt assured would succeed; he awaited calmly the coming of the Second Army which, he was convinced, would be on the field in time; and, in reply to an earnest question of the King, simply said,[1] "Your Majesty will win to-day, not only the battle but the campaign."

At the prospect of success which seemed at hand, the Austrians had felt hope and pride revive, and Benedek was greeted with enthusiastic cheers by the soldiery as he rode towards the front. The Austrian chief, however, had lost the occasion, if he had a favourable chance of attacking, and before noon the heads of the Crown Prince's columns were seen advancing and threatening his right. The telegraph had informed Benedek that the Second Army was upon the march,[2] but he gave little attention to the report, and the advent of the new enemy seems to have taken him by surprise. The Crown Prince had set his army in motion at between 7 and 8 a.m.; he had effected the passage of the Elbe, and his troops, marching with speed and ardour, had overcome the obstacles in their way, and were now advancing towards the tract that spreads between the Trotinka and the Bistritz.

[1] Moltke on the Battle of Koniggrätz, *United Service Magazine*, Dec. 1891, p. 443. Moltke's only answer to Bismarck, who was in a state of passionate excitement, for he had staked everything on the war, was an offer of a cigar.

[2] "Luttes de l'Autriche," vol. iii. p. 234.

Benedek hastily recalled the 4th and 2nd corps—these had been thrown too forward, we have seen, from the first, and had recently pressed still more onward against Fransecky's shattered division—and ordered them to confront the Second Army; but the message, unfortunately, arrived too late. The Prussian Guards, seizing the opportunity at once, had reached the Austrian positions with extreme celerity; had taken possession of the hills of Horenowes, which had been left almost without defence, and had soon swept with their batteries the plains beyond as far as Cistowes and Maslowed. The 4th and 2nd corps were thus forced to make the retrograde movement, exposing their flanks to a terrible storm of deadly missiles, and the 4th corps, inclining to the right, retreated upon the Austrian centre, while the 2nd corps assailed by the 6th of the Prussians, the left wing of the Second Army, which had passed the Trotinka, was scattered in flight, and with difficulty attained the Elbe.

Ere long misfortunes, in quick succession, fell on the imperilled and, even now, doomed army. Owing partly to the retreat of the 4th and 2nd corps, and partly to the confusion of the strife, the dominant height of Chlum in the centre had been left for a time ill-guarded, and, taking advantage of a fog on the plain, the Prussian Guards pressed forward and had soon seized Chlum, the key of the whole position of their foes. Benedek, who, hitherto had seemed unaware of the manifold perils

gathering around, now really alarmed, moved his 6th corps in reserve against the audacious Guards; Chlum and the heights were taken by the Austrians again, but before long Prussian reinforcements came up, and the 6th corps was almost destroyed, the needle-gun doing prodigious havoc. Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the battle, defeat had lowered on the Austrian banners. The Army of the Elbe having at last succeeded in crossing the Bistritz, had attacked the Saxons, and its commander skilfully turning his enemy's left, had, despite the efforts of the 8th corps in the rear, forced the whole wing back in precipitate retreat.

The great Austrian army might now be compared to a huge sea animal, hemmed in on all sides, by assailants plying their deadly harpoons. The right flank had been driven in by the Crown Prince; the occupation of Chlum had placed the Prussians upon its centre, and had made them masters of the main road, which formed its principal avenue of retreat, and its left wing had been beaten by the Army of the Elbe. The First Army, by this time relieved from the oppressive strain to which it had been exposed, soon advanced in force against its stricken foes; and the Second Army, drawing in from the right, completed a disaster already certain. The whole Austrian army gave way; its convex front suffered frightful losses from the cross fire of its uniting foes, and its masses, confused and crowded together, were soon involved in despairing rout. Yet Benedek, a true soldier if not a real

chief, fought stubbornly and heroically to the end, and left nothing undone to keep back the enemy. The last corps of the reserve, moved rapidly forward, for a time checked the march of the Prussians, but it, too, ere long was broken up and scattered. It was now the turn of the Austrian cavalry, unwisely kept inactive for hours on the field; and these fine squadrons, nobly supported by artillerymen, who fought and fell by their guns, covered the retreat, not without success. The defeated army was enabled to get over the Elbe, but it lost not less than 187 guns and rather more than 40,000 men, including fully 20,000 prisoners, of whom half had suffered from no wounds. The losses of the Prussians were less than 10,000 men, but their armies were so worn out and their ranks so confused—the inevitable result of their junction on the field—that Moltke did not attempt to press the pursuit.

Decisive a battle as Sadowa was, it cannot be compared with Jena or Austerlitz, "those mighty waves that effaced the landscape." The Prussians once more lost sight of their enemy; and Benedek drew off his shattered forces making for Olmütz, by very rapid marches. Custozza had by this time been fought; a worthy son of the Archduke Charles had completely defeated the Italian army, and information reached the Prussian camp that the whole remaining forces of Austria would be gathered together for the defence of Vienna. Moltke advanced cautiously towards the Austrian capital; the three

Prussian armies approaching each other, although moving on separate lines; and he succeeded [1] by a very able movement in cutting Benedek off from Vienna, and intercepting his intended retreat. By the 22nd of July the victorious Prussians had made their way into the great plains of the Marchfield, not far from the historic field of Wagram, having performed feats of arms which had never entered the imagination of Frederick the Great; and a Power once a vassal, had overthrown its Suzerain. The Treaty of Prague, negotiated in some measure by France, brought the momentous strife to an end; the supremacy of Germany was transferred from Austria to Prussia, as the leading state; Austria in fact, was driven out of Germany, and Prussia acquired a large extent of territory, and became the head of a German Confederation of the North. It is unnecessary to follow the contest between the small force which Prussia had employed against the Confederate States of Germany; it strikingly illustrates the success which a little but well-directed army may obtain against forces superior in numbers, but without good organization or command.

The extraordinary success of Prussia, in the great war of 1866, astonished and almost terrified Europe. Her military power had not been suspected, and an immense majority of soldiers believed that Austria would easily defeat the enemy. Yet the dispositions of Moltke were generally condemned, especially the

[1] These operations are very well analyzed by General Derrécagaix, "La Guerre Moderne," vol. i. pp. 552, 556.

double march into Bohemia and Saxony; and the needle-gun alone was set down as the cause of Sadowa and the other Prussian victories. A generation, indeed, which retained memories of the marvels of 1796 and 1814, and which had lately witnessed the fine operations around Richmond, of that great captain, Lee,[1] could not fail to censure strategic methods which unquestionably departed from the principles these grand passages of arms illustrate; and it may confidently be asserted that no impartial critic of repute approved of Moltke's direction of the war, until after the triumphs of 1870-1. The subject invites a few comments, the excitement of the time having passed away, and our knowledge of the facts having been enlarged.

Moltke invaded Bohemia on a double line, with three and then two armies widely divided by a mountainous and intricate country, but converging to an arranged point of junction, the Austrian army being nearly equal in number to his entire forces and not distant. Operations of this kind are hazardous in the extreme, for not to refer to other dangers, the enemy is given an opportunity to strike in, before the

[1] Among many other authorities we may cite Lecomte, "Guerre de la Prusse, etc." vol. i. p. 369, who expresses the ideas of Jomini in this matter. "Depuis qu'on fait la guerre, en avait rarement placé de telles masses dans des conditions d'action plus pitoyables que l'étaient les masses Prussienes. La célèbre bévue des généraux Autrichiens de 1796, s'avançant au secours de Mantoue en trois colonnes séparées, bévue si bien châtiée par Bonaparte et connue de tous les écoliers, était certes un chef d'œuvre de stratégie à côté du plan prussien de 1866."

separate masses unite, and to attack and beat them successively in detail. Many notable examples have made this truth manifest; and Napoleon's exploits around Mantua, only illustrate, with peculiar splendour, what, for instance, has been achieved by Turenne, by the Archduke Charles, and the illustrious Lee. Nor does the war in Bohemia, in 1866, disprove a conclusion that may be accepted as an axiom of the military art. Had Benedek been a real general, had his army been equal to rapid movements, he probably could have carried out his project; could have reached the table-land between the Iser and the Elbe before the approach of the Prussian armies; and holding a central position, and interior lines, could have fallen first on Prince Frederick Charles, and then turned against the Second Army. Nay, false and slow as his operations were, and bad as were his army's arrangements, he might certainly on the 26th and 27th of June have attacked the Crown Prince with very superior forces, and made Prince Frederick Charles powerless, so decisive was the advantage of the position which, without knowing it, he had attained. Moltke's strategy, therefore, was very dangerous; it might have led to real disasters, and it should be added that Napoleon has condemned this strategic method in many passages, and that he[1] emphatically condemned movements of

[1] "Commentaires," vol. vi. p. 336, ed. 1867, "Il est de principe que les réunions des divers corps d'armée ne doivent jamais se faire près de l'ennemi; cependant tout réussit au roi." Attempts have been made to distinguish the operations of Frederick from

the kind, undertaken, on the same theatre of war, by Frederick the Great in 1756 and 1757, although the King was completely successful. Nor can it be forgotten that in 1778 Frederick failed, in circumstances extremely similar, against Lacy and the brilliant Loudon.

The question, therefore, is, what excuse can be made for the violation of a principle in war, which exposed the Prussian armies to great dangers, though every kind of advantage was on their side? An apology has been composed by the Prussian Staff, very possibly from the pen of Moltke himself, but it fails to meet the real facts of the case, and if not uncandid, it is at best inadequate. Benedek, the argument runs, had not sufficient time [1] to interpose between the Prussian armies, and to command space enough, on the scene of the conflict, to enable him to attack them when apart; his central position and interior lines were, accordingly of no use to him, and he placed himself between them only to incur disaster. In the events that happened, this, we believe, is true, as regards the Austrian leader's project, to gain the table-land between the Iser and the Elbe, and to fall on Prince Frederick Charles, in the first instance, repeating the attack on the Crown Prince, but this really

those of Moltke, but they have not been very successful, and Napoleon's remark is of universal application.

[1] "Prussian Staff History," p. 65. Here and there "auri per ramos aura refulget," the hand of Moltke appears through these masses of details. Yet it is doubtful if he really is the author of this apology.

evades the true issue. Benedek had time and space enough on the 26th of June, and until after the end of the 27th,[1] to assail the Crown Prince in overwhelming numbers, and to hold Prince Frederick Charles in check, and this consideration will be held decisive, except in the eyes of the worshippers of success. This apology, therefore, falls to the ground, it cannot stand the test of well-informed criticism.

Another explanation of Moltke's strategy, is that he made use of a discovery of the age, which lessened the risk he certainly ran. One of the dangers of an advance on a double line is, that it is difficult to make the converging armies keep time with each other on their march; and this gives the adversary an occasion to interpose, and to strike right and left at his divided enemies. But the electric telegraph enables armies to communicate with each other, at any distance, from hour to hour, nay from minute to minute, and so to regulate their movements as to be in concert; this immensely diminishes, in operations of the kind, the hazards which otherwise would be incurred; and Moltke directed the Prussian armies, by the electric telegraph, in their advance on Gitschin. In reply to this, it might be enough to say, that no hint is to be found in the "Prussian Staff History," that this argument is of the slightest value; it should be

[1] The subject is very ably discussed by General Derrécagaix, "La Guerre Moderne," vol i. p. 292. A simple analysis of the real facts is conclusive.

recollected that the electric telegraph did not prevent Prince Frederick Charles from acting without regard to the Crown Prince, and marching on Munchengrätz instead of Gitschin; and, above all, did not prevent Benedek[1] from gaining a central position between them, and possessing the advantage of interior lines. There is, however, we believe, even a more complete answer to what is little more than an ingenious afterthought. Benedek had the assistance of the electric telegraph, even to a greater extent than Moltke;[2] the conditions of communication were, therefore, rendered at least equal for the hostile armies; and, though this is not the place to examine the subject, it can be proved, we think, that the electric telegraph is of

[1] Writers who have made the discovery that "Moltke invented a new strategy," have denied that a central position and interior lines are of any advantage; Moltke would have been the first to laugh at such nonsense. The value of a central position and of interior lines was seen conspicuously in 1866, in the operations of Falkenstein, against the levies of the German Confederation, and in the Prussian advance to the Danube; and it was exhibited very clearly, as we shall notice afterwards, in Moltke's movements during the siege of Paris. The advantage may not be so decisive, in the case of the immense armies of the present age as it was in the days of Turenne, or even of Napoleon, but it is, and must be very considerable. General Derrécagaix ably reviews the question in, "La Guerre Moderne," vol. i. pp. 275, 293, and seems to think that the change in the size of armies has made no essential difference.

[2] This evidently is the opinion of Lord Wolseley, *United Service Magazine*, October, 1891, p. 6. "The power which the electric telegraph gave Moltke was most important; but the telegraph ought also to have helped Benedek."

more use to an army in a central position, and standing upon interior lines, than to two armies drawing towards each other, but still far apart.

A third apology that has been made for Moltke has found favour with distinguished soldiers, and certainly is entitled to respect. He knew, it is alleged, that Benedek was a bad general, and that the Austrian army was of inferior quality; and, acting on this knowledge, he ventured to undertake, in order to gain decisive success, operations hazardous no doubt in theory,[1] but not really perilous, as affairs stood. It deserves notice that this is the very excuse made by Clausewitz[2] for Frederick the Great, probably with reference to Napoleon's censures on the movements of the King in 1756 and 1757, analogous, we have seen, to those of Moltke. Moltke, too, probably was not ignorant of the character of Benedek, and of the state of his army; and, unquestionably, many a great captain has done things in the presence of an adversary he could hold cheap, which he could not attempt in the presence of a really able enemy, commanding a good and efficient army. This is repeatedly seen in the campaigns of Turenne, of Marlborough, and above all of Napoleon; the most striking instance perhaps in history is Nelson's attack on the fleet of Villeneuve, an inspiration of

[1] This is the position taken by Lord Wolseley, *United Service Magazine*, Oct. 1891, pp. 4, 6.

[2] Théorie de la grande Guerre," French translation, vol. iii. p. 193.

genius, which would have been madness had not Nelson been well aware of the impotence of the foe in his grasp; and it should be added that this kind of discernment is one of the distinctive marks of a real leader in war. But disregarding an enemy may be carried too far; and a whole plan of operations, based on the notion that liberties may safely be taken with him, is assuredly open to adverse comment. Napoleon has over and over again insisted that a strategic project ought to assume that a opponent, as a rule, will do what is right,[1] and that it should follow correct methods; and wonderful as were his feats of arms, when dealing with men like Alvinzi and Mack, he never deviated from this sound principle. But the whole plan of Moltke, in 1866, was in its conception too hazardous, and this apology, therefore, is not sufficient.

The true excuse to be offered for Moltke, is we believe of a different kind, and curiously enough is found in the work of an enemy.[2] We have already indicated what that excuse is, but we shall very briefly recur to the subject. The excessive dissemination of the forces of Prussia, at the moment when hostilities begun, was, as we have seen, not

[1] This, too, is laid down by Moltke himself, "The Franco-German War," English translation, vol. i. p. 94.

[2] Les Luttes de l'Autriche, vol. iii. p. 27: "Cette concentration des deux armées offrait évidemment de grand dangers, mais elle était la conséquence forcé du plan adopté par l'état major prussien." The writer, however, was not aware that this plan was adopted by Moltke, under the stress of circumstances, over which he had no real control.

to be ascribed to Moltke; and, had he been free to carry out his ideas from the first, there is reason to believe that he would not have attempted the invasion of Bohemia on a double line. But the Prussian armies being divided as they were, he had no choice, but to do what he did, or to operate in quite a different way, that is to concentrate the armies behind the Bohemian hills, and to advance on a single front of invasion; and this course must have involved delay, and would have enabled the Austrian army to take defensive positions of the greatest strength, and possibly even to take the offensive. He was limited therefore to two alternatives; and though it has been urged by good judges,[1] that the alternative he adopted was the worse of the two, that he ought to have drawn all his forces together, and entered Bohemia on one line only, and that, in that event, he would have achieved success, decisive and certain, without running risks; this conclusion is by no means obvious. In any case, if fault is to be found with his strategy, this must be attributed in the main to a position of affairs,[2] which was, in no sense, of his own making.

If Moltke's operations in 1866 were, therefore, hazardous in a high degree, and are fairly open to

[1] Lecomte, vol. i. pp. 370–1. This view probably was that of Jomini.

[2] Lord Wolseley, who seems to have had special information on the subject, distinctly asserts, *United Service Magazine*, Oct. 1891, p. 8; "Moltke was not responsible for the dispersion of the army."

sharp criticism, the situation must be taken into account, and, from this point of view, much is to be said for them. These operations, however, will not find a place among the master-pieces of the art of war; and they can be justified only upon assumptions, which must be kept in sight, if they are not to be condemned. It is otherwise if we confine our study of the contest to the day of Sadowa; here Moltke's dispositions rise above censure, and deserve all but the very highest praise. The Prussian leader, indeed, did not regard a principle on which Napoleon often insists,[1] that separate armies ought not to unite in face of the enemy on the field; and the course even of this battle shows that the great master, as a rule, is in the right. The First Army on that 3rd of July was for a time in undoubted peril; the Second Army might quite conceivably have failed to perform a most arduous task; the junction of the two armies caused such confusion that it was impossible to pursue the enemy, and Benedek drew off the great mass of his forces. But the incapacity of the Austrian chief, and the feebleness and despondency of the Austrian army had, by this time, been made clearly manifest; it is very doubtful, too, if Benedek had a real opportunity to attack with success; and the tactics of the Prussians, bearing in mind the existing state of affairs, were the best possible. The bold

[1] "Commentaires," vol i. p. 444: "Le principe de ne jamais réunir ses colonnes devant et près de l'ennemi." Waterloo and Sadowa are special exceptions that really prove the rule.

and rapid decision of Moltke, too, to unite the three armies for a decisive effort was worthy of a chief of a high order, and it should be said, besides, that a general-in-chief was never more loyally and ably seconded. The march of the Crown Prince to the field was one of the finest in the annals of war; and the conduct of the Prussian Guards has been never surpassed.

Moltke gave proof, in the war of 1866, of decision, promptness, and force of character, but not, we think, of strategic genius. His movements are still censured[1] by very able critics, and had his career ended on the field of Sadowa, he would never have been placed among great captains. The causes of the success of the Prussians are manifest, and lie upon the surface. Benedek was a commander of the most faulty type; he was dull-minded, obstinate, and sluggish in the field, and inevitable disaster was the consequence. He had one great chance, but he threw it away; his opera-

[1] Charles Malo, before referred to, observes: "Du 22 au 29 Juin, il ne tenait qu'au général autrichien de les battre en détail, et de rendre leur jonction impossible, pour peu qu'il sût mettre a profit sa position centrale et ses lignes intérieures; aucune raison, militaire ne l'empêchait, et s'il est assurément permis à la guerre de faire fonds jusqu'à un certain point sur l'impéritie de son adversaire, si l'on peut se permettre vis-à-vis d'un Mack ce qui l'on ne tenterait pas impunément vis-à-vis d'un archiduc Charles, il y a lieu de reconnâitre avec tous les historiens impartiaux de la campagne, que l'état-major prussien a par trop largement escompté des fautes qu'un éclair de bon sens ou un sage conseil suffisait à faire eviter. En un mot, il ne faut rien moins que tant inertie d'une part, pour faire excuse de l'autre, de tant de témérité."

tions from the 26th to the 30th of June simply played into his enemy's hands; his dispositions at Sadowa were poor and defective. In General Hamley's words,[1] he was one of those leaders who "spoils his offensive movements by hesitation, defends himself by makeshifts, and only half understands his own blunders when they have ruined his army;" and he became the easy prey of his skilled antagonists. The Austrian army, too, was not to be compared in natural strength, in moral force, in organization, in power of manœuvre, and in armament, to the enemy it met; it was even more inferior to King William's army, than the army of Daun was to that of Frederick the Great. The Prussian army, on the other hand, if not nearly as perfect as it was made afterwards, was by many degrees the best army of the time. It had been adjusted to the new conditions, its organization had been admirably arranged, it had been divided into units of manageable size; the rapidity of its movements and its energy in the field received justly the praise of all eye-witnesses. Its leaders, too, though mistakes were made, for mistakes must necessarily be made in war, exhibited skill, vigour, intelligence, promptness, and usually acted in perfect concert; and in these respects we perceive how fine had been their training. The tactics of the three arms had not yet been perfected, but the needle-gun alone gave the Prussian infantry a prodigious advantage over their foes; and the Austrians

[1] "Operations of War," p. 469. Ed. 1889.

quailed under the power of this destructive weapon. This army which, when in face of its enemy was "like a panther darting on an ox," had been, in a great measure, the creation of Moltke; this circumstance was, in 1866, his real title to renown.

CHAPTER IV.

Immense increase of the military power of Prussia after 1866—League with Southern Germany—The army of Prussia and the Confederation of the North—Its South German auxiliaries—Great efforts made to improve these forces—Attitude of France and Prussia after 1866—War probable—Efforts made by Napoleon III. to increase and strengthen the French army—Sketch of the history of that army—The Emperor's attempted reforms almost fail—Deplorable weakness of the French compared to the German armies—Other causes of inferiority—The war of 1870-1—The plan of Napoleon III.—The Army of the Rhine—The Emperor's plan is frustrated—The plan of Moltke—Concentration of the First, Second, and Third German armies in the Palatinate and the Rhenish provinces—Positions of the belligerent armies at the end of July—The French perhaps lose an opportunity to strike the First Army—The combat of Sarrebruck—Advance of the united German armies to the frontier of France—Combat of Wissembourg and defeat of a French detachment—Battle of Wörth and defeat of the French army—Precipitate retreat of Macmahon—Battle of Spicheren and second defeat of the French—Critical position of the Army of the Rhine.

THE Treaty of Prague, we have seen, had enlarged Prussia, and had made her the head of a German Confederation of the North. An immense development of her resources for war was one of the immediate results of this sudden growth of power. Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, and Hesse-Cassel, had become parts of her newly acquired territory;

Saxony and other small states were her Confederate allies; and four new corps d'armée, raised in these lands, were added to the nine of the Prussian army, increasing the total number to thirteen, while the system of the reserves and Landwehr of Prussia was extended to these conquered or dependent provinces. The standing army of the Confederation of the North, that is, of Prussia under another name, became thus fully 550,000 strong, and the Landwehr not less than 400,000, the Prussian Landsturm being again omitted; and the standing army, including the reserve, was composed in the main of trained soldiers, while the Landwehr, though a supplemental force, was capable of good service in second line. Yet even these figures do not convey an adequate notion of the huge increase of the military strength of Prussia at this time. Partly owing to the fear of the ambition of France, for 1813 had been never forgotten, and recent events had revived its memories, and partly to the impulse to German unity, which the war of 1866 had greatly quickened, the German states of the South soon joined hands with Prussia, though allies of Austria a few months before, and Bavaria, Baden, and Würtemberg placed their forces at the disposal of their late enemy. The standing armies of these three powers exceeded 100,000 men; the reserves, corresponding to the Prussian Landwehr, were not less than 60,000 or 70,000; and these arrays formed a powerful addition to the armed strength of the dominant state of Germany. Within less than four years from

the day of Sadowa, the standing army of Northern and Southern Germany, directed and controlled from Berlin, was fully 650,000 strong, including about 100,000 horsemen and 1500 guns; and this colossal mass was supported by nearly half a million men, for the most part equal to the work of war. Napoleon had never such a force in arms, even when he drew levies, of many races and tongues, from all parts of a subdued continent.

Nor were earnest and constant efforts wanting to strengthen the formidable military machine which had been enlarged into these huge proportions. Trained officers were employed to extend the system of Prussian organization through the Confederate allies, and especially to reform the South German armies. The most careful attention was given to the means of transport and communication, with a view to war; new railways were made and others designed; and wonderful as had seemed the rapidity of the assembly of the forces of Prussia in 1866, a much higher rate of celerity was attained. Sadowa, in fact, instead of making the victors rest content on their laurels, and satisfied with what they had already won, became a point of departure for fresh preparations, and for perfecting the state of the Prussian army. The experiences of the contest were turned to advantage; faults that had been committed were carefully noted, and especially the methods through which the three arms can be brought to a state of the highest efficiency, became the subject of intelligent study. The formations of

the infantry, if not finally settled, were gradually made more light and flexible, in order to increase the power of its fire, and to lessen the effects of the fire of the enemy; the cavalry, which had been scarcely a match for the Austrian squadrons, was much improved; the material of the artillery was transformed, old smooth-bore guns being given up as useless, and rifled breech-loading guns being placed in their stead; and the tactics of the artillery were greatly changed, the reserves of guns of the age of Napoleon having been found to be extremely cumbrous, and of little avail in the battles of the day. These multifarious and searching reforms, too, were carried out by the military chiefs with an energy, a thoroughness, and a practical skill, of which eye witnesses have left no uncertain sound. "The activity of the Prussian army," said one of the ablest of these, "is prodigious. It is not equalled in any other army of Europe; it is that of a hive of bees." [1]

We cannot exactly set forth the share of Moltke in these great works of reform; but they had, we

[1] For further information on the extension of the military power of Prussia after 1866, and on the improvement of the Prussian and German armies, the reader may consult, among other authorities, Rüstow, vol. i., chaps. iv. and v.: "Note sur l'organisation Militaire de la Confédération de l'Allemagne du Nord," written by Napoleon III.; Talbot's "Analysis of the organization of the Prussian Army;" Reports of the "Commission des Conférences Militaires;" the "Letters on Artillery, Cavalry and Infantry" of Prince Kraft Hohenlohe; and, above all, the important "Reports" of Baron Stoffel, a French military attaché at Berlin during this period.

know, his cordial support. These preparations were not without cause; the long-standing feud between Prussia and France, composed for a time, had become again active, and war between the two states was already probable. Napoleon III. had not been averse to the aggrandizement of Prussia, up to a certain point, and he had even sympathies with German unity; but France, he insisted, should have an equivalent in an extension of her frontier towards the Rhine. Bismarck artfully flattered the Emperor's hopes, without committing himself to definite pledges; and, when Austria and Prussia became involved in war, Napoleon probably thought that he would have an occasion to carry out successfully his ambitious projects. He was baffled, however, by the results of Sadowa; instead of being made an arbiter between the contending Powers, he had to submit to the will of Prussia; his demands for compensation out of German territory were courteously, but distinctly, rejected, and the formation of the German Confederation of the North, and the alliance of the South German States with Prussia, made him aware that a gigantic German Power had established itself along his borders. He felt the bitterness of humiliation and defeat; and, meanwhile, the splendour of the Prussian victories had aroused the jealousy of the French army, and the immense increase of the power of Prussia for war had alarmed French politicians and statesmen. The classes which direct opinion in France began to denounce Prussia as a deadly enemy; and

Prussia, in turn, intent on becoming the undisputed head of a united Germany and on being supreme from the Rhine to the Niemen, saw in France the only obstacle in her path. Old passions and hatreds were quickened into life by the animosities of the present time; and a rupture, ultimately perhaps to grow into a furious conflict of hostile races, seemed imminent in a not distant future. Prussia, accordingly, had sharpened her weighty sword; and the prodigious extension of her military strength, and especially her league with the South German Powers, were largely due to the prospect of a struggle with France.

In view of the war, which they deemed certain, the French Emperor and the men around his throne directed their minds to the state of the army and to the means of increasing its force. The army of France, perhaps the oldest in Europe, has, like the nation, "had its ebbs and flows," and has proved every extreme of fortune. It was little more than a feudal militia until after the middle of the seventeenth century; it became the admiration and the scourge of the Continent when administered by Louvois and directed by Turenne. After a series of defeats, due to Eugene and Marlborough, it emerged from the War of the Spanish Succession, stricken but victorious, under a great chief, Villars; and, though it fought brilliantly when led by Saxe, it sank into decrepitude during the Seven Years' War. It almost perished in the Great Revolution, yet reappeared in the masses of levies which drove the

League of Europe across the frontiers, and it accomplished wonders against the hosts of the Continent, ill-organized, with incapable leaders, and in the fetters of obsolete routine. Ere long it fell into the hands of Napoleon, and though it was by no means free from very grave defects, it marched, with the great master, from Madrid to Moscow, and it inscribed on its banners a roll of victories unparalleled for their number and splendour. Yet its reverses were as great as its triumphs, and it saw Vitoria, Leipzig, Waterloo, as well as Marengo, Jena, and Austerlitz. At the Restoration it was little more than the shadow of a great name for many years.

After the fall of Napoleon the French army was formed on a plan, of which the chief authors were Marshals Gouvion St. Cyr and Soult, well-known lieutenants of the great Emperor. This scheme of organization embodied ideas of the Republican and Imperial eras, adapted, however, to an age of peace and of national exhaustion, after a strife with Europe. The conscription, established in 1798-9, which formed the system of recruiting in France, which had filled the ranks of the Grand Army with hundreds of thousands of good soldiers, but which Napoleon had frightfully abused, was retained as an institution of the state, but was modified to a considerable extent; and the practice was allowed of admitting substitutes in the place of the recruits drawn to enter the army. The principle, therefore, of the Prussian system, that every subject is bound

to military duty, a principle first asserted in Revolutionary France, was abandoned, or evaded at least; and more than one writer has, perhaps fancifully, declared that a decline in the warlike temper of the French people may be traced to this circumstance. The conscription was divided into two classes, the first of men called to serve in the ranks, the second of men to form a reserve; and this last class was left wholly untrained, the experiences of 1792-1815 having proved, it was thought, that the youth of France had such a natural fitness for war that a few months of preparation would make them soldiers. The army, constituted in this way, was composed of about 300,000 men, for the most part troops of a high order, for the term of service was eight years at least; it was supplied, also, with good material of war, and with thousands of skilful and veteran officers, the survivors of the Napoleonic days, and it could be increased by nearly 300,000 more; this reserve, however, it must be borne in mind, being without military discipline and skill, and in fact an assemblage of rude levies. In this respect the reserve was very inferior even to the Landwehr of the Prussian system, for the Landwehr had had experience in the ranks; but Soult, recollecting the glories of the past, especially insisted that a force of this kind would prove formidable and efficient in the field, and would suffice as a second line for the regular army.

The army of France, formed on this system, distinguished itself in Algerian warfare, produced

at least one eminent chief, Bugeaud, and a considerable number of brilliant officers, and played a conspicuous part in the siege of Sebastopol. After the accession to the throne, however, of Napoleon III., it underwent a marked change for the worse; and this, owing to two distinct causes. By this time the old officers of the Grand Army had passed away, and had left no successors of equal military worth and skill; and the principle of commuting the duty to serve, by the mere payment of a sum of money, a most mischievous principle had been established. Recruits, who had been compelled to find substitutes, approved by the state, or to serve in person, had been made enabled to discharge themselves from military liabilities of all kinds, by a simple contribution to the War Office, and the results were, in different ways, disastrous. The army became crowded with bad troops, tempted into the ranks by the sums thus obtained; it was largely avoided by the better classes; its quality was in some measure impaired; and it was even considerably reduced in numbers, for men could not be always found to replace the men who had freed themselves from the obligation to serve. Yet these were not the worst defects in the existing military system of France. New conditions of war were being developed; owing to the extension of railways, operations in the field were year after year becoming more rapid; and the invention of rifled small-arms and cannon made it necessary that soldiers should have a careful training. In these

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circumstances the untried reserve of the French army became almost useless. Recruits, who, in the first part of the century, had months to learn a soldier's calling, before they were summoned to join their regiments, had now only a few weeks or days; and raw conscripts, who could become familiar with the old musket in a very short time, could not equally deal with arms of precision. The reserve therefore became a mere force on paper; and Napoleon III. made it no secret that, in the Campaign of Italy in 1859, he had no second line to the regular army.

The expedition to Mexico, almost as fatal to the Second Empire as Spain had been to the First, still further weakened the French army. The Emperor, a man of thought and ideas, though almost a failure as a man of action, had endeavoured, meanwhile, to introduce improvements into a military system behind the age; and, in some measure, he strengthened the reserve by requiring that its levies should have a partial training. The French army, nevertheless, remained a very imperfect instrument of war; and Napoleon made an effort, after Sadowa, and in view of the probable war with Prussia, to augment its numbers and to render it more efficient. The classes for recruiting were somewhat increased, further attempts were tried to give the reserve discipline; and the principle of a general liability to serve was asserted by the institution of the Garde Mobile, a levy, however, which, even in theory, could not form a really effective

force, for it was to be called out for a fortnight only in the year, and it could be at best simply a weak militia. These changes, moreover, were only proposed between 1866 and 1868; time was needed to make them of any use, insufficient and feeble make-shifts as they were; and ere long Marshal Niel, the ablest of the Imperial counsellors, was removed from the scene by premature death, and faction and folly in the Chambers in Paris baffled and set at nought the Emperor's projects. The reform of the army proved, in a word, abortive; and when 1870 had come that army presented a strange contrast to that of Prussia and her auxiliary States. It showed a force on paper of more than a million of men; but 500,000 of these were Gardes Mobiles, a levy scarcely called into existence, and that must be almost left out of the account; and it was really composed of 567,000 men, of whom a considerable part was an ill-trained reserve. Immense deductions, too, had to be made from this total, for troops in Algeria, in depôts, in fortresses, and for men that could not be deemed effective; and the true number of the standing army of France was under 340,000 men,[1] comprising some 40,000 cavalry, and less than 1000 guns, and backed by a weak reserve of very little value. This was wholly different from the colossal arrays which

[1] "The Franco-German War." "Prussian Staff History," vol. i. 12. The great importance of the military statistics collected by Moltke is proved by the fact that, in 1866 and in 1870 he was perfectly acquainted with the military resources of Austria and France. Spies, too, were very largely employed.

Prussia and her dependents could send into the field; and France would be outnumbered nearly two to one should she venture to enter the lists with her rival.

Nor were numbers only anything like a test of the inferiority of the military power of France. The army of Prussia, we have seen, was organized on the local territorial system; and this system, if well administered, whatever objections may be made to it, unquestionably facilitates the assembly of troops, for the operations of war, in a short space of time. It is obvious, in fact, that when corps d'armée are established in separate tracts or provinces, with their reserves and their requirements on the spot, they can be brought rapidly into the field; and this celerity is of supreme importance, for it may secure the initiative in the first moves of a campaign. The French army, on the other hand, was formed on what we may call the central national system; that is, large bodies of troops existed, as a rule, in certain parts of the country, but it was necessary, on a declaration of war, to unite these into corps d'armée; their reserves were scattered throughout France, and many of their essential needs were kept in great depôts and arsenals at a distance from them. This considerably delayed their assembly in the field; and though mechanism is not to be rated too highly, it has been fairly remarked, that,[1] under the one system the instrument could be used at once, and that, under the other, time was

[1] "Note sur l'Organisation Militaire," p. 69.

required to put together its component parts. The railways, again, of Prussia and Germany were generally constructed with a view to war; those of France were rather made for the ends of commerce; and this difference alone would give the Prussian army a great advantage, in the event of a collision between the two powers, for it would enable it to combine, and to take the field more quickly than its supposed enemy. Yet even all this does not suffice to show how ill-fitted France was to cope with an infinitely stronger and better prepared antagonist. Napoleon III. had no administrative power; he never possessed a good war minister; many of the subordinates in the War Department were incapable men, without a sense of duty; and the military organization of France accordingly was out of joint, and did its work badly. On the other hand, Moltke and Roon had brought the military organization of Prussia, and to a certain extent of the lesser states, to a point that almost approached perfection.

On the opposite sides of the Rhine, therefore, formidable military strength confronted weakness, and an admirable organization for war was placed beside one that was bad and defective. Apart from inferiority in numbers, too, the army of France was not equal to that of Prussia. In the chassepôt rifle, indeed, the French infantry possessed a better weapon than the Prussian needle-gun; and this gave it a distinct advantage. But the German artillery was far superior to the French; and the mitrailleuse,

a feeble instrument in the field, had been largely substituted for the ordinary gun, to please Napoleon III., in the French batteries. The cavalry of France was still true to its noble traditions, and excelled in daring and rapid movements; but it had not been trained as an exploring force, one of its chief uses in the days of Napoleon; and in this respect the Prussians were far before it. If, too, a considerable part of the French army was composed of troops who had been in the ranks much longer than the young Prussian soldiers, a considerable part was a mass of recruits; and the elements, therefore, of military power were better combined in the hosts of Prussia. But the most marked feature of inferiority was this: in the French army, the three arms had not been accustomed to act in concert, as systematically as in the Prussian service; their proper functions had not been as fully ascertained; and this told powerfully against the French. Turning to the higher grades and the chief commands, the French staff, even in the time of Napoleon, exhibited several plain defects; it had since declined from a high standard; and it could not be compared to the staff of Prussia, by many degrees the best in Europe. The French army, therefore, did not possess a source of power of extreme value; and in the most important respect of all, its supreme direction, it was sadly wanting. It had not a single great commander in high places: most of its leaders, versed in Algerian warfare, had neglected the nobler parts of the military art,

and were unequal to large operations in the field: they had little knowledge of scientific war, and of strategy and tactics of the grand kind: and these heirs of the renown of Napoleon's legions were ignorant of Napoleon's teaching and methods. Men such as these are "but stubble to the swords" of the generals of Prussia, and above all, of Moltke.

In this sketch of the military state of France, some elements of power have to be still considered. Her organized army was pitiably weak; but in her Algerian reserves, in her large garrisons, in thousands of veterans, who had seen service, and in her gallant and martial youth, she had real materials of strength in war, and ill-arranged and scattered as they were, time was to show that these could be made formidable. She had besides, immense wealth, and world-wide credit, the command of the sea as against Germany, and the patriotism and pride of a great nation, and these resources, seldom borne in mind sufficiently, even by the ablest soldiers, were, as they have always been, of the highest value. Nevertheless the French people at this juncture was in a condition that was not favourable to a perilous conflict with such a power as Germany. Its sons, indeed, were, in no sense, degenerate, as a fine page of history was ere long to prove, and it had still that singular aptitude for war which distinguished the Gauls of the age of Cæsar. But it had been devoted for years to the arts of peace, to the accumulation of riches, to

successful industry; it had suffered from the effects of democratic despotism, most injurious to the national life, and corruption and sloth were but too prevalent in its higher, and even its middle classes, with consequences pregnant with many evils. On the other hand, Germany was animated by a strong feeling to complete, once for all, the national unity; and she was inspired by a growing hatred of France, the enemy of ages that was thwarting her purpose. The enthusiasm of 1792-4, which had enabled France to triumph over old Europe, was now, in fact, on the side of Germany.[1]

The Luxemburg incident showed how profound were the animosities dividing Prussia and France; though negotiations, never clearly explained, were continued, even after Sadowa, between Napoleon III. and Bismarck, on the principle of composing mutual discord[2] by the spoliation of a neighbouring and friendly state. The Hohenzollern candidature for the throne of Spain brought the festering elements of passion to a head, and involved Germany and France in a tremendous conflict. This is not[3]

[1] Ample details respecting the state of the French army, at this period, will be found, inter alia, in General Trochu's "L'armée Française en 1867;" in the "Reports" of Stoffel; in Rüstow, vol. i. chap. iii.; in the "Prussian Staff History," vol. i. chap. i.; and in the "Conférences Militaires." See also "Les Forces Militaires de la France en 1870," by le Comte La Chapelle, Napoleon III., under a feigned name.

[2] For a sketch of these negotiations, see Fyffe's "History of Modern Europe," vol. iii. pp. 384-5.

[3] On this subject the reader may consult the official correspon-

NAPOLEON III.
Emperor of France.

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the place to pronounce a judgment on the conduct of the persons engaged in a lamentable quarrel that appalled Europe: enough to say that the provocation came from Prussia, that the French Government was guilty of petulant folly, and that Bismarck aroused to frenzy the wrath of Paris, in concert perhaps with chiefs [1] of the army who, indisputably, were eager to force on a war, in which the chances, they knew, would be all against France. At a great Council of State held at the Tuileries, the die was cast on the 14th of July, 1870; the French reserves were called out on the following day; the Chambers voted immense credits, amidst a scene of thoughtless excitement; and Paris, overflowing with madding crowds, and clamouring wildly through her streets, hailed with exultation the declaration of war.

The fury of the capital hardly stirred the nation, and alarmed and embarrassed Napoleon III. The Emperor had, at heart, been opposed to a rupture; he knew much better than his "lightminded" counsellors how immense was the military strength of Germany; but he had yielded to importunities he was too weak to resist, and he was forced to confront a position of affairs, fraught with tremendous peril to France and his throne, with a mind and body

dence on the dispute between France and Prussia; an able, but one-sided pamphlet, "Who is responsible for the war?" by "Scrutator;" and Fyffe, vol. iii. pp. 417, 421.

[1] Many passages in Moltke's letters show that he had long been desirous of a trial of strength, between France and Prussia, in the field.

enfeebled by disease. His plan for the campaign had been formed for some time, and he has told us himself that it followed the design of his mighty kinsman in 1815, one of the most splendid of the designs of Napoleon.[1] In 1815 the armies of Blücher and Wellington were disseminated upon a wide and deep front, extending from Ghent and Liège to Charleroi; and Napoleon, drawing his forces together, with a secrecy and skill that have never been surpassed, succeeded in striking the centre of the Allies, and in separating their divided masses, and only just missed a decisive triumph. Napoleon III., in the same way, believed that the armies of Prussia and Southern Germany would be far apart at the beginning of the campaign, and his purpose was to collect a powerful army behind the great fortresses of Metz and Strasbourg, to cross the Rhine between Rastadt and Germersheim, and, having paralyzed or defeated the South German armies, to attack the Prussians in the valley of the Main, in the hope of renewing the glories of Jena. Though he was aware that the enemy would be superior in numbers, in the proportion at least of two to one, he calculated that this bold and rapid manœuvre would make up for deficiency of force, and he had resolved to oppose 250,000 Frenchmen

[1] See Comte La Chapelle, and "Campagne de 1870," par un officier attaché à l'Elat-Major-Général, generally attributed to Napoleon III.; "Prussian Staff History," vol. i. p. 20. We believe Napoleon III. set off, in 1870, with his uncle's account of Waterloo in his carriage.

to about 550,000 Germans, who, he assumed, would be widely divided, as Napoleon had opposed 128,000 to 224,000 of Blücher and Wellington. But would a sovereign, who had never excelled in war, be able to wield the arms of Achilles, and to imitate Napoleon's march to the Sambre? Was the French army of 1870 to be compared in organization and military worth to that which sprang into Belgium in 1815? Above all, would the chiefs of the German armies repeat the mistakes of Blücher and Wellington, and would the forces of Prussia and Southern Germany be at a distance from each other when the blow would fall?

The bold offensive project of Napoleon III. was, it is believed, founded, also, on[1] a hope that Austria and Italy would join hands with him, should the French eagles appear beyond the Rhine, and it should be added that if he[2] contemplated an advance at first, with 250,000 men only, he was convinced that he would have an immediate reserve of not less than 150,000, without reckoning the unorganized Garde Mobile. The plan, however, brilliant perhaps in conception, in no sense corresponded to the facts, and in a few days proved wholly abortive. Immense efforts were nevertheless made, in the first instance, to carry it out; and it is a mistake to suppose that the French War Office, and the administrative services attached to it, were deficient in active good

[1] Fyffe, vol. iii. pp. 424, 425.
[2] Comte La Chapelle.

will and energy. Eight corps d'armée, including the Imperial Guard, were given the name of the Army of the Rhine, and directed into Alsace and Lorraine; the organized parts of these arrays were soon collected along a broad arc, extending from Thionville to Strasbourg and Belfort, and thousands of troops and other men of the reserve were hurriedly despatched to join these forces. Here, however, the military system of France betrayed its inferiority, and, to a great extent, broke down, and the assembly of the army, which ought to have been rapid in the extreme, to give it a chance of success, was tardy, mismanaged, and in all respects imperfect. Even the formation of the corps d'armée required time, and the large contingents needed to make up their strength were scattered over all parts of the country. The railways, too, especially in Alsace and Lorraine, were not sufficient and not well prepared to carry masses of men and material, with the celerity which the occasion demanded; and the administration of the French army, founded on the principles we have referred to, and, at the crisis, largely composed of inexperienced and incapable men, proved unequal to bear the strain upon it, and to supply the corps and the troops on the march with all kinds of appliances necessary for taking the field.[1] Napoleon III.

[1] The French accounts of the maladministration and want of preparation of the army may be suspected of exaggeration. But they are confirmed by that of the "Prussian Staff History,"

reached Metz in the last days of July, and the spectacle before him was very different from that which he had expected to find. Most of his corps, indeed, were spread along the frontier; but instead of 250,000 men, not 200,000 had been assembled; large parts of these were inferior troops; the reserve fell far short of what it was on paper, and the whole Army of the Rhine was not yet a sufficiently equipped and organized force. In these circumstances the ill-fated monarch virtually gave up his offensive project; but "willing to wound and yet afraid to strike," and already dreading opinion in Paris, he did not adopt any other course, and he allowed his forces to remain in the positions they held, irresolute, and already waiting on events.

Moltke had been hampered in 1866; but in 1870 he had perfect freedom of action, and, under the nominal command of the King, he now directed the whole armed strength of Prussia and her confederate allies. Learned in the history of war, and possessing rare insight, he had anticipated the design of the French Emperor as long previously as 1868, and, in view of a probable conflict with France, he had proposed in a very able paper,[1] that the South German armies, on a declaration of war, should not remain isolated south of the Main, but should march to the Rhine, and effect their junction

vol. i. p 29, and by Moltke in his "Précis of the Franco-German War," vol. i. p. 6. English translation.

[1] "Prussian Staff History," vol. i. p. 50.

with the armies of Prussia and the States of the North. It was as if Wellington and Blücher in 1815 had drawn their forces together, on a narrow front, before their adversary had approached Belgium, and this project of Moltke must have completely baffled the offensive design of Napoleon III. But when the armies of Germany had come into line, what were their movements to be in the next instance? Moltke well knew that the united military power of Germany was much greater than that of France; he believed, too, that the German armies could be assembled more quickly than their antagonists, and he formed a plan of operations, which, if dictated, so to speak, by the situation before him, was, nevertheless, admirably conceived and masterly. The Rhenish Provinces and the Palatinate had formed a kind of sallyport for an attack on Germany in the wars of Louis XIV. and of Napoleon, but they had been in the hands of the Germans since 1815; and, if strongly occupied by German armies, they would be a base of operations of the highest value for a great offensive movement into Alsace and Lorraine. Moltke insisted therefore that the German forces, to be collected, we have seen, on the Rhine, should cross the river and join hands with those of Rhenish Prussia, to the west, and the uniting masses were to bear down in irresistible strength on the French frontier, where, to the north-east, it is most vulnerable. Should the enemy attempt to take the offensive, he was to be met and encountered in

pitched battles, the issue of which could be hardly doubtful, for the Germans would be two-fold in numbers; but should he assume a defensive attitude, he was to be driven from any lines he might hold, and a general invasion of France was to follow. In that great movement the main object of the Germans should be to force the French armies, in defeat, into the Northern Provinces, and thus to open a way to the capital of France.

This plan was not a conception of genius, or even, in any sense, original; it was that of Marlborough when, after Blenheim, he had intended to enter France; it was that laid down by Clausewitz, perhaps, for Gneisenau, with a view to a contest with France after 1815. But it was distinctly the best that could be adopted, and it reveals a daring and accomplished strategist, bent on a grand and decisive offensive movement. The project of Moltke was carried out with a celerity and precision that showed how perfect the organization of the German armies had become. The orders for the assembly of these prodigious hosts were received on the 15th of July; the operation was completed in about sixteen days; and the working of the machinery to effect this object was so admirable that, Moltke, it is said, in reply to the anxious question of a friend, remarked, "I have nothing to do; my arrangements are made." The corps d'armée, collected, and formed on the spot, had soon called in their reserves at hand; their material hard by was quickly supplied; and the gathering masses were

rapidly conveyed, by the military system of the German railways, from the Niemen, the Vistula, the Oder, and the Inn, and westward from the Lower Moselle to the Rhine, and the tract on its western bank, the Palatinate and the Rhenish Provinces. Three large armies were now formed, on the system of 1866; the First, composed[1] of two corps for the present, and numbering about 60,000 men, under the command of the old and gallant Steinmetz; the Second, 130,000 strong at least, four[2] corps, led by Prince Frederick Charles; and the Third formed of five[3] corps, a combined Northern and South German army, about equal in force to the Second, and under the direction of the Crown Prince of Prussia. These masses, however, fully 320,000 men, were sustained in second line by a gigantic reserve,[4] five corps, excellent and trained soldiers; and the forces collected for the invasion of France already numbered half a million of men, with guns and cavalry in due proportion, drawn together in little more than a fortnight. By the end of July the First Army, the right wing of the coming invasion, held the region around Trèves and Lower Sarre; the Second, the centre, was assembled about Mayence, and thence extended

[1] The 7th and 8th Prussian corps.

[2] The 3rd, 10th, and 4th Prussian corps, and the Guards.

[3] The 5th and 11th Prussian corps, two Bavarian corps, the 1st and 2nd, and two divisions of Wurtemberghers and Badeners, equal to one corps.

[4] The 1st corps to be added to the First Army, the 9th, 12th, and 2nd to join the Second, and the 6th to support the Third.

along the main roads leading through the Palatinate towards the verge of Lorraine; and the Third Army, the left wing, had its centre at Landau, filling the country between Neustadt and Spires, and already overhanging Alsace. A concentration of force, so rapid and complete, had never been witnessed before in war, and it was powerfully aided by the enthusiastic ardour of the Teutonic race from the Niemen to the Moselle. Germans disliked the conflict of 1866, but the nation in 1870 sprang, as a man, to arms to avenge old wrongs and more recent injuries, on the enemy of Rossbach, of Jena, of Waterloo.

The Emperor, meanwhile, had lingered at Metz, and no important change had been made in the disposition of the Army of the Rhine, the mass of which lay spread on the French frontier, along the borders of Lorraine and Alsace. In the judgment of its chief, it was still not ready to take the field and to begin to move, though great efforts had been made, during the last few days, to furnish it with the needs it required, and considerable reinforcements had been added by degrees. It is probable however that, at this conjuncture, a real commander would have found the means of directing it against the enemy in his front, and of retarding at least the German invasion, if not of gaining important success. On the last day of July, and for a day or two afterwards, the First Army on the Lower Sarre and at Trèves stood isolated, and without supports at hand; three corps of the French army and the

Imperial Guard were only two or three marches distant, and it is difficult to suppose that[1] 100,000 men, supplied with all that was necessary for the march, might not have been moved against the 60,000 of the First Army, and have fallen on it in overwhelming strength. Villars had taken a step like this, with excellent results, when confronting Marlborough on this very ground in the indecisive campaign of 1705; and had it been taken by Napoleon III., the Army of the Rhine, after partial success, would probably have found the means of retreating safely, and of stubbornly defending the line of the Moselle, as Villars had done, with ultimate success. The Emperor, however, was not a great general; he let a good opportunity pass, and he was, besides, wholly unable to direct the large mass of the Army of the Rhine, which, unlike the independent German armies, remained altogether under his sole command. Instead of the bold offensive, which was, at least, promising, he adopted a perilous and weak half measure, to satisfy, it would seem, the Parisian populace, already clamouring for an advance to the Rhine. On the 2nd of August a small German detachment was assailed by a largely superior force at Sarrebruck on the Middle Sarre, but an idle demonstration could have no effect; the French did not even cross the river,

[1] This operation, and the probable results, are fully and clearly explained by General Derrécagaix, "La Guerre Moderne," vol. i. pp. 512-13. See also "La Guerre de 1870," by V. D., p. 98. The "Prussian Staff History" is silent on the subject.

and the Army of the Rhine remained in its camps. By this time, indeed, indecision and alarm were predominant in the French Councils. Intelligence had been received that the German armies were approaching the frontier in immense strength, but nothing definite had been ascertained; and, though attempts at reconnoitring on a great scale had been made, the French cavalry, unskilled in this service, had been unable to discover the real position of affairs. In these circumstances, Napoleon III. maintained his passive and expectant attitude, the worst possible in view of impending events.

The hurried advance of the chief part of the Army of the Rhine to the French frontier, deficient as it was in requirements for the field, had induced Moltke to believe, for a time, that the French intended to take a bold offensive; he had made preparations for a defensive stand, and he did not push forward the German armies for a few days after they had been assembled. The puny attack at Sarrebruck, however, and the continued inaction of the Army of the Rhine, facts made known at the head-quarters at Mayence, through the excellent exploring of the German horsemen, soon made the situation clear to him; and orders were given for an immediate advance to the frontier. The First and Second Armies drew near each other, the one making for the Middle Sarre, the other marching in the same direction, behind the western slopes of the German Vosges, along the main avenues into Lorraine; and thus the prospect of striking the

First Army, and beating it in detail, disappeared. The Third Army, meanwhile, had all but reached Alsace prepared to deal the first weighty blow, and to begin the great general offensive movement, which was to force the French northwards and to uncover Paris; and the three armies had, by the 4th of August, their foremost divisions quite near the frontier. The march of the invaders was carefully screened by bodies of horsemen, thrown forward, and keeping away the enemy's patrols; and the French seem to have been unaware of its significance, and even as to its true direction, until the reality was ascertained too late.

Turning to the opposite camp we must next glance at the situation of the Army of the Rhine, already within reach of the destructive tempest. Of its eight corps two were all but out of the account, one[1] being upon the Marne at Châlons, and the other, far to the south, round Belfort,[1] though this had despatched a single division northwards. Six corps therefore only remained, and these, by this time 210,000 strong, spread along the frontier, in disjointed parts, and dangerously exposed to a bold attack. One corps[2] was behind Sarrebruck, on the Middle Sarre, two[3] being immediately in the rear; the Imperial Guard was not far from Metz, and these masses, perhaps 135,000 men, formed the left wing of the whole army. A[4] single corps,

[1] The 6th and 7th corps respectively.

[2] The 2nd corps. [3] The 3rd and 4th corps.

[4] The 5th corps.

about 25,000 strong, was in the centre, holding at Bitche a chief passage through the French Vosges; and another[1] corps and a part of that at Belfort, perhaps 50,000 men in all, and composing the right wing of the French army, were on the northern verge of Alsace. 320,000 men, therefore, the first line of the German invasion, well led, well combined, and acting well in concert, were about to fall on 210,000, unprepared, separated at wide distances, and, for the most part, under inferior chiefs.

The Third Army, as Moltke had arranged, was the first to pour over the French frontier. Its advanced divisions had surrounded the old town of Wissembourg, famous for the lines of Villars, by the forenoon of the 4th of August; and it had soon been engaged with a single French division, imprudently thrown forward without supports, in complete ignorance of the German movements. The French made a stern and prolonged resistance, but they were overwhelmed by the converging masses of enemies, fourfold at least in numbers; and the division, losing more than a third of its men, was driven, in rout, upon the main body. This was the right wing of the Army of the Rhine, composed of the 1st corps and of a part of the 7th, and under the command of Marshal Macmahon, the Ney of the days of the Second Empire; and it was in positions around Wörth, a strategic point of no small importance, covering roads that lead to Strasbourg and across the Vosges. Macmahon was

[1] The 1st corps.

now aware that the Germans were at hand, but, extraordinary as it may appear, he had no conception of the immense superiority of their approaching forces, his cavalry had been so ill employed; and, even after the defeat of Wissembourg, he thought for a moment that he could take the offensive, and he did not at once call to his aid the corps at Bitche, the 5th, directed by General Failly, which the Emperor had placed under his orders. Even on the 5th he did not believe that anything like serious peril was near, and it was not until the following day that he requested Failly to join hands with him, and that with one division only, a proof how little he understood the true state of affairs.

As a battle, however, might be imminent, he drew up his army along the heights near Wörth before nightfall upon the 5th, and his confidence, it is said, was so great that he exclaimed to his staff, "The Prussians will be badly worsted." The position was one of great strength against a direct attack made by foes not in overpowering numbers. The stream of the Sauer ran before the Marshal's front, a difficult obstacle to an advancing force; his lines were protected by the villages of Fröschwiller, Elsasshausen, and Morsbronn, defensive points that had been in part fortified; the slopes which the enemy would be compelled to ascend were in most places very intricate ground, and yet they afforded facilities at certain spots for counter attacks, essential for defence, especially in the case of French soldiers. The position, however, was

liable to be turned on both flanks, and dense woods on either side of the French army would give a powerful adversary a marked advantage to conceal and combine his attacks. Macmahon placed his divisions along the line ;[1] his force, allowing for the loss at Wissembourg, was probably about 46,000 men, including 5000 horsemen and 120 guns.

The Crown Prince meantime had been making ready for a decisive effort against Macmahon's army. He had ascertained the position and the strength of the French by pushing forward his bodies of horsemen, but he did not contemplate a general attack until he had all his corps in hand, an event not probable until the 7th of August. An accident, however, or it is more likely the impetuous zeal of subordinate chiefs, precipitated dangerously a hard fought battle. On the morning of the 6th the 5th Prussian corps fell boldly, near Wörth, on the French centre, and the attack was supported by the 2nd Bavarian corps issuing from the woods on Macmahon's left. These efforts, however, completely failed, and though part of the 11th Prussian corps soon came into line, and the superiority of the German artillery was proved even

[1] There is no French official account of the war, but the careful analysis made by General Derrécagaix, in "La Guerre Moderne," the narrative of V. D., and many tracts and books written by distinguished French officers, in some measure supply a lamentable desideratum. These works should be read to check the "Prussian Staff History," not always trustworthy, especially as regards the numbers engaged in several battles, no doubt in order to conceal the overwhelming superiority, as a rule, of the Germans in force.

from the first moment, the difficulties of the attack were great, and the French, possessing much the better small-arms and skilfully making offensive returns, had for three or four hours a distinct advantage. The condition of the Germans, indeed, had become so critical that orders arrived from the Crown Prince to suspend the course of the fight for a time, and it has been thought that had Macmahon seized the favourable opportunity, at this moment, he might have forced his enemy to draw off beaten. The presence of mind, however, and the self-reliance of Kirchbach, the chief of the 5th corps, inclined the scale trembling in the balance; he refused to give up the doubtful struggle, and he was thanked for his bold resolve by the Crown Prince, who reached the field soon after mid-day. By this time the remaining part of the 11th corps had joined in the contest, the Würtemberghers being a short way in the rear, and determined efforts were made to turn Macmahon's right, while the 5th corps fell on the French centre. The pressure of superior numbers at last told, notwithstanding admirable charges of the French infantry, who more than once drove their enemies back, entangled as they were in difficult ground; the Germans, sheltered by ravines and woods, gradually established themselves on their enemy's flank, and the French right wing was compelled to fall back towards the centre round Elsasshausen. A noble incident, however, marked its defeat: the French cavalry made an heroic attempt to protect their

comrades as they retired, and though they were almost wholly destroyed by a withering fire in the street of Morsbronn, one of the finest charges in the annals of war recalled the historic days of Eylau and Waterloo.

During all this time the 5th corps had been making a furious onslaught on Macmahon's centre, while the 2nd Bavarian corps had renewed its attack from behind its wooded screen on the French left; but decisive success was not achieved, until the 1st Bavarian corps, coming on the field, made the overwhelming pressure impossible to withstand. Another splendid division of the French cavalry offered itself up a victim to shield the footmen; but, gradually the defence began to slacken, and the beaten army to show signs of panic. Nevertheless some brave regiments clung tenaciously to every point of vantage to the last; and it was not until their foes, in irresistible force, had converged against them on both flanks, had stormed Froschwiller and Elsasshausen, and had pierced Macmahon's centre right through, that the battle can be said to have come to an end. The whole French line then precipitately gave way, and the roads through Alsace swarmed with affrighted fugitives, hurrying away in despair and hideous rout. The retreat was in some degree covered by the arrival of the division of Failly's corps, summoned, we have seen, by Macmahon late; but the victory of the Germans was not the less complete. The French army lost nearly half its numbers, reckoning

prisoners, and a fourth part of its guns; the losses of the Germans were nearly 10,000 men, a proof how fierce the conflict had been; but they had almost ruined their beaten enemy. Macmahon, who had fought to the last moment, did not attempt to retreat towards the main French army, through the passes of the Vosges, in his rear; he made through Lower Alsace with the wreck of his forces.

At Wörth, 46,000 Frenchmen and 120 guns, these very inferior to those of the enemy, had been opposed to 100,000 Germans, and not less than 300 guns, and the issue of the contest had been long uncertain. The battle is honourable to France in the highest degree; but had it been conducted on the German side with due regard to the principles of war, it could not have lasted for this space of time. The attacks of the Germans were, at first premature; until after noon they were badly combined, and the immense superiority in force of the Third Army was not felt until nearly the end of the struggle. This precipitate haste, and these imprudent tactics alone enabled Macmahon's army to protract the noble defence it made; and had the battle followed the Crown Prince's design, the result would have been quick and decisive. The boldness and firmness of Kirchbach, however, in continuing the strife, when it had once begun—another among repeated instances of the characteristics of the Prussian leaders, acquired largely through Moltke's precepts—are worthy of the very

highest praise; and the German divisions supported each other admirably, when they had been at last collected for the decisive attack.

Macmahon skilfully fought a very brilliant fight, if we regard Wörth as an isolated fact only; and the French soldiery, who formed the flower of the army, and who had perfect confidence in themselves and their chief, especially the cavalry, showed heroic qualities. Yet, if we examine the Marshal's conduct as a whole, and with reference to the military art, we perceive that it was a series of errors. It is difficult to understand, how, after the affair of Wissembourg, he was ignorant of the strength of the enemy in his front, and why he did not at once fall back from Wörth. He ought, evidently, to have summoned the entire corps of Failly to his assistance on the 5th; as he had made up his mind to fight, it was his obvious interest to have every available man on the field. He, no doubt, showed tactical skill at Wörth, but he ought not to have made a hopeless attempt to resist, after both his flanks had been turned, and his centre broken; and this was a main cause of the rout of his army. Above all, he ought to have effected his retreat on the main army, through the passes in his rear, and not have made an eccentric movement southwards; this gave his enemy a most favourable chance to annihilate the remains of his forces, and it uncovered the centre and left of the Army of the Rhine, with the gravest and most disastrous results. The rout, however, of Wörth was so

complete, that perhaps he had not his troops sufficiently in hand to direct their retreat in the true direction.

A battle, meanwhile, of a very different kind, had been fought on the same day, far to the left of Wörth, and west of the Vosges. The Germans, we have seen, had approached the frontier of Lorraine and Alsace by the 4th of August, and three divisions of the First and Second Armies, a fourth being at a little distance, had, by the following day, drawn near Sarrebruck. The French corps, the 2nd, under General Frossard, which had taken part in the demonstration of the 2nd, at the intelligence of the advance of the enemy, had fallen back from the plains behind the town, and had occupied a position near Forbach, along a series of heights in the midst of woods, extending from Spicheren to the village of Stiring. Kameke, the chief of the foremost German division, believed that his adversary was in full retreat, and having obtained the permission of his leader, Zastrow, fell boldly on the strong line of the French. The Prussian artillery again showed its superiority to that opposed to it, but the attack of Kameke at first failed, though his troops displayed the most determined courage. Another German division ere long came up, and though the French were in turn reinforced, the assailants gradually had the advantage; a projecting eminence, called the Red Spur, was stormed by an heroic effort, and the Germans, as at Wörth, made their footing good

on their enemy's right, under the screen of a forest, which spread along this side of the French position.

Up to this moment Frossard had thought that a real attack was not being made, and he had not even appeared on the field. He now, however, took his troops in hand, and sent off to the chief of the corps in his rear, making an earnest demand for immediate aid. But meanwhile the third German division had joined in the fight, and made its presence felt, and while the battle raged along the front of the French, a bold effort was made to turn their left, and to seize Stiring, on which it rested. The struggle continued for some hours, each side fighting like good soldiers, though the destructive fire of the German batteries produced gradually marked effects; but no reinforcements reached the hard-pressed French; and Frossard was already contemplating a retreat, when the apparition of the fourth hostile division, on his left, compelled him hurriedly to draw off his forces. Stiring was now captured and the whole position lost, but the retreat was conducted in good order, and the Germans did not attempt a pursuit. Their losses, indeed, exceeded those of the enemy, about 4800 to 4000 men, but they had not the less gained important success. The defeat of Frossard laid Lorraine open, and broke the front of the Army of the Rhine.

The Germans were at first inferior in force at Spicheren,[1] but less so than is commonly supposed.

[1] It is impossible even nearly to reconcile the German and

They were superior, however, at the close of the battle, without taking into account the last division, the presence of which determined the retreat of Frossard, and they were then probably about 30,000 to 25,000 men. On the other hand, there was no feat of arms on the side of the French, compared to the storming of the Red Spur height, and the troops of the 2nd French corps were not equal in quality to those which Macmahon led. The most striking feature of the battle, certainly, was the contrast presented by the contending leaders. The attack of Kameke was, no doubt, premature, as had been the original attack at Wörth, but he was admirably seconded by his colleagues; and here we see once more a remarkable instance of one of the best characteristics of the Prussians in command. How utterly different was the conduct of the generals in the opposite camp! Frossard was not in the field until the afternoon; he was absent from his post at a momentous crisis, and he lost precious hours in applying for the aid which otherwise he might perhaps have secured. Yet this was by no means the worst: three French divisions, commanded by Bazaine, a name of evil repute in the war of 1870, were not ten miles from

French accounts of the numbers engaged on either side at Spicheren. "The Prussian Staff History" repeatedly assumes that the French were largely superior in force; but this is denied by General Derrécagaix, "La Guerre Moderne," vol. i. p. 530. The French seem to have had at first the numerical advantage, but they were outnumbered at last.

the scene of the conflict; and if Frossard was late in seeking assistance, the sound of the battle ought to have prompted Bazaine to advance with all his troops to Spicheren. Had he taken this course, 25,000 men would have been placed in the scale on the side of France, and the French must easily have gained a victory. Bazaine, however, remained inactive, and a fine opportunity was thrown away. From the day of Roncesvalles to that of Waterloo, it has been a distinctive fault of the warriors of France to think of themselves only, and to neglect their comrades.

Wörth and Spicheren were the first act in the great drama of the war between France and Germany. The Emperor's plan for the campaign had failed; he had been tried in the balance and found wanting. Moltke had perfectly carried out his fine strategic project, and France had been invaded in irresistible force. Gleams of the old lustre had shone on the French arms; the conduct of Macmahon's soldiery on the field of Wörth had been worthy of the heirs of Napoleon's legions. But the Germans were in overwhelming strength; and not in numbers only, but in military worth, their armies were better than that of their enemy. They had been more quickly assembled in the field; their organization was far superior; they were better prepared, equipped, and trained for war; in artillery, and in the art of exploring, by cavalry, they easily surpassed the French. The French army, on the contrary, was numerically weak; its

administration had not fulfilled its functions; it was sent to the frontier before it was ready; it had a considerable admixture of bad soldiers; and, owing to its deficiency in reconnoitring power, it was like a man with short sight fighting with a man endowed with perfect and true vision. Its leaders, too, were far behind those of the Germans; not that a great military genius had appeared among these, but that the German generals were skilful, daring, and self-reliant, and especially acted well together, while the French generals were deficient in these respects. As to the supreme direction of the two armies, it would be absurd to compare Napoleon III. to Moltke, and the Emperor was already beset by a difficulty, which was to cause his ruin, the necessity he felt of yielding to opinion in Paris. It was this that led to the trifling of Sarrebruck; it was this that kept his army upon the frontier when he knew that it was outnumbered two to one, and when a retreat had become his only safe course; and it was this, we shall see, that made his advisers neglect military considerations for supposed reasons of state, and that precipitated an appalling catastrophe. He might plaintively assert,[1] "All may yet be repaired," but dark clouds even now were lowering on France.

[1] The well-known phrase of the Emperor, "Tout peût se réparer," uttered after Wörth and Spicheren, is an exact repetition of a remark of Napoleon after Waterloo. "Comment.," vol. v. p. 194.

CHAPTER V.

The German armies do not pursue the French after Wörth and Spicheren—Opportunity lost by Moltke—Retreat of the Army of the Rhine, in part towards Châlons, in part towards the Moselle—Projects of Napoleon III.—The main part of the French army falls back from the Nied to Metz—Advance of the German armies to the Mosellè—Marshal Bazaine made commander-in-chief of the whole French army, including the part approaching Châlons—His first operations—The French attempt to retreat on Verdun—Battle of Colombey Nouilly or Borny—Advance of the Germans beyond the Moselle—Bazaine and the French army to the west of Metz—Battle of Mars La Tour—Bazaine falls back to a strong position outside Metz—What he might have accomplished—Advance of the Germans—Battle of Gravelotte—Its vicissitudes and characteristics—The French, at last defeated, are driven back on Metz—Reflections on this passage in the war, and on the conduct of Moltke and his adversaries.

THE double defeat of Wörth and Spicheren had broken up the Army of the Rhine. Macmahon, we have seen, had fled southwards to the right; Frossard, on the left, had moved to Sarreguemines, exposing himself to an attack on his flank; Failly, with the centre, had hurried away from Bitche, detaching part of his troops to the main army, and seeking, amidst many perils, to join Macmahon. The German leaders, however, did not press the enemy, as had happened after the victories that

preceded Sadowa; and they did not turn their immense success to advantage. In the belief that Macmahon had fallen back, as he ought to have done, on the main army, they sent a small force along the roads towards Bitche; but when it was found that he had gone in another direction they did not attempt to molest his retreat. Frossard, again, was not even followed; Failly was permitted to effect his escape, and to unite with the wreck of Macmahon's forces; and, as had been witnessed in Bohemia before, contact with the foe was altogether lost. Moltke was not, perhaps, responsible for all this, for he was still many leagues in the rear; but, at this moment, he did not contemplate a determined pursuit of the French army, and it is characteristic in fact of him, that he seldom attempted to crush a defeated enemy, the very opposite, in this respect, to Napoleon. Without troubling himself with the movements of the French, he proceeded leisurely, but surely, to carry out the design which he had formed for the campaign, that is to make the success of the invasion certain, to drive his adversaries, beaten, to the north, and to secure an approach to the French capital. For this purpose the immense reserves of the German armies, already on the march, were hastened forward to the scene of events; and five corps,[1] about 150,000 strong, were added to the gigantic forces

[1] The 1st corps joining the First Army; the 9th, 12th, and 2nd the Second Army; the 6th corps the Third Army. See ante. The 2nd corps was still some marches in the rear.

already spreading over Alsace and Lorraine. On the 8th of August, two days after Wörth, the vast columns of the Third Army were directed through the passes of the Vosges; and while the Baden division was told off to secure the flank, and to lay siege to Strasbourg, the left wing of the great invasion was marched to the Sarre, and thence to the Upper Moselle. Meanwhile, the First and the Second Armies, the right wing and centre of the German hosts, advanced slowly on the 10th of August through the table-lands and plains of Lorraine, the First Army forming the pivot of a great general movement on the Moselle, where the French army, it was supposed, was making a stand on the line between Metz and Thionville. 450,000 men, at least, were thus set in motion to overwhelm the remains of an army of 210,000, which had already suffered heavy reverses, which at this moment could hardly place 150,000 men on the course of the Moselle, but which, it was assumed, was in a strong position, resting on two fortresses covering its flanks.

It is difficult to condemn the strategy, for, manifold as are the chances of war, it made ultimate success all but certain, and in the event it was more than justified, if this is no conclusive test of its merits. Moltke had resolved not to enter the interior of France without an overwhelming superiority of force, and this once secured he might fairly expect that he would be able to effect his daring project. He therefore waited until his

reserves were at hand, and he moved, without an attempt at haste, to the Moselle, ever intent on the one great object in view. Nor can it be denied that circumspection and caution were needed in the advance; it was reasonable to expect that the French army would defend the formidable line of the Moselle, as Villars had held it against Marlborough; the real state of that army and its chiefs could hardly be fully known in the German camp, and a great invasion of France had been always perilous. Nevertheless, an impartial student of war will probably think that in this instance Moltke let a grand opportunity slip, and failed to strike a blow that might have been decisive. He was in communication by the telegraph with the three armies, and it is not easy to understand why, after Wörth and Spicheren, he did not at once follow his defeated enemy. A very slight effort of the Third Army would have simply annihilated Macmahon's forces, and probably would have destroyed Failly; and had it sent even a small detachment across the Vosges, the First and Second Armies, with this support, could have crushed to atoms the remaining parts of the[1] Army of the Rhine, already beaten. In that event, a great and decisive victory might have been won about the 10th of August, before the French army had had time to retreat, and the war would perhaps have come to an end without a

[1] This movement has been indicated by several writers; and what Moltke might have accomplished is well shown by V. D., "La Guerre de 1870," pp. 213-17.

desperate struggle protracted for months. Be this as it may, when on the path of victory Moltke was never to be even named with Napoleon, though the telegraph gave him an immense advantage, unknown in the days of Jena and Austerlitz, but the difference cannot be deemed surprising if we recollect that Moltke was in his seventieth year.[1] It was certainly, also, a plain mistake that the French army was not kept in sight; this gave it ample time to escape had it been even rationally led; nay, in spite of the overpowering strength of its foes, it afforded it, we shall see, more than one chance to strike with effect, perhaps to achieve great things had a real commander been at its head.

Meanwhile the shattered Army of the Rhine, though not pressed as it ought to have been, had been effecting its retreat in distress and confusion. Macmahon, ultimately joined by Failly, after falling back towards Haguenau and Strasbourg, had marched hurriedly through the defile of Saverne; and crossing the Upper Moselle and the Meuse, was, in obedi-

[1] In commenting on the operations of the Germans after Wörth and Spicheren, Major Adams, though an enthusiastic admirer of Moltke, observes, "The one quality in which Von Moltke seems deficient is that of reaping the full and instantaneous fruits of victory. The time that was permitted to elapse after the first struggle lost to the Germans the opportunity of bringing the war to a brilliant and rapid conclusion," "Great Campaigns," pp. 614-15. Still, the thinker on war should ever bear in mind the sagacious remark of Turenne, "Memoires," p. 185: "Souvent les personnes les plus habiles font des fautes qu'il est plus aisé de remarquer que de prévenir."

dence to the commands of his ill-fated master, seeking a refuge near the great camp of Châlons, where he could rally the corps that had been placed at Belfort, the 7th, commanded by General Douay. The left wing and part of the centre of the French army, for the time not 140,000 strong, taking even into account the troops sent off by Failly, were thus left exposed to a crushing blow, which, however, we have seen, was not struck, and they remained open to the irresistible attacks of an enemy almost threefold in strength, should they attempt to make a stand in Lorraine. In these circumstances Napoleon III. resolved to abandon the line of the Moselle, and ordered a general retreat on Châlons; and this probably was the most judicious course, for if he could not expect to repeat the marvels of the campaign of 1814, his whole forces would have been drawn together, and Paris, a colossal fortress, would have formed a huge entrenched camp, most favourable as a field of manœuvre.

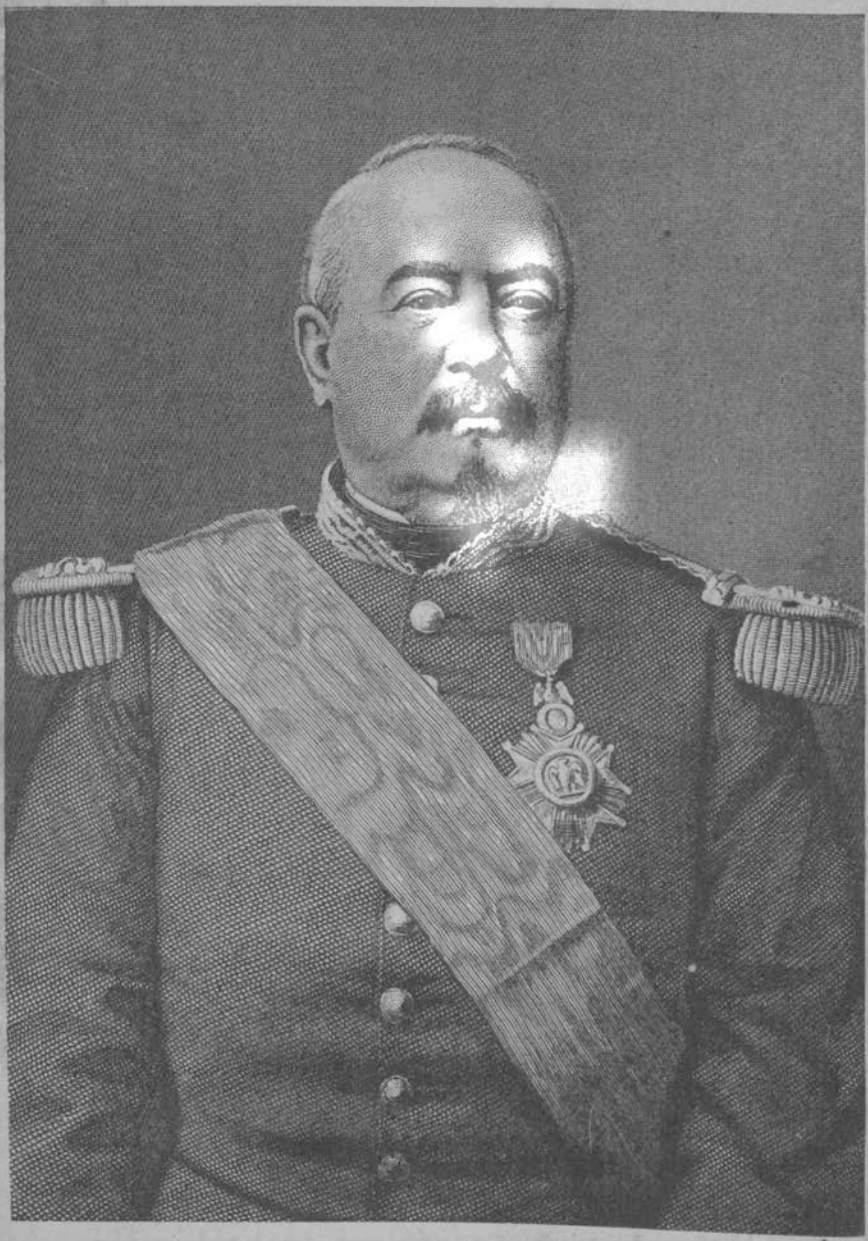
Once more, however, the dread of the scorn of the capital had a fatal influence on the troubled Head of the State, who never should have been a general-in-chief. The Emperor was afraid to retreat so far; and when it had become apparent that the German armies were not making a rapid advance, he resolved for a few hours to try to stand on the Nied, an affluent of the Sarre, to the east of Metz. The corps which had been formed at Châlons, the 6th, under Canrobert, the Crimean veteran, had been hurriedly directed to move upon Metz, and three-

fourths of it had, ere long, reached the fortress, raising the numbers, therefore, of the army in Lorraine[1] to about 170,000 men, 10,000 of these probably being not effective troops. Macmahon, however, was not called up, though as yet he was far to the east of Châlons, and a single day sufficed to induce the Emperor to give up any project of accepting battle. The line of the Nied was too short to afford a good position of defence against a more powerful enemy; and, at the intelligence of the approach of the Germans, the French army was hastily directed on Metz, invaluable hours having been lost. The retreat was effected in severe weather;[2] signs of insubordination, panic, and terror, had begun to show themselves among the French soldiery, always sensitive either in victory or defeat; and the attitude of their chiefs was despondent in the extreme. By the 12th of August the retiring army was in front of Metz on the eastern bank of the Moselle. It had not been molested by the slow moving enemy, and it might easily have made its way to Châlons, but for lamentable vacillation and weakness in command.

[1] A careful comparison of many authorities seems to prove that the calculation is fairly correct. The figures given by Moltke, we shall see, are altogether wrong, and those of the Prussian Staff are not nearly correct.

[2] A good account of the state of the French army, in its retreat on Metz, after Wörth and Spicheren, at least as regards the troops in Lorraine, will be found in "Metz, par un officier supérieur de l'armée du Rhin," p. 50. See also "Guerre de 1870," by Bazaine, pp. 42, 46.

During these lame and halting operations of the French, the invaders had been overrunning Lorraine. The Third Army, detaching a few troops to mask the petty forts of the Vosges, but reinforced by an additional corps, had reached the Upper Moselle by the 14th of August, had taken possession of Lunéville and Nancy, the chief towns of the old Duchy, and already held the avenues leading to Paris. The First and Second Armies, strengthened by four corps, advanced along the great roads between the Sarre and the Moselle, and spread over the adjoining region, at first extended on a wide front, but drawn towards each other when the news arrived that the French army was upon the Nied. When informed that the enemy was in full retreat, Moltke made arrangements for a further advance of the two armies upon the Moselle, which deserve the attention of students of war. He had lost sight of the French army, but he had been apprised that it was behind the Moselle, yet, as it was quite possible as was the case in fact, that it was concentrated east of the river, and in the neighbourhood of the great stronghold of Metz, his preparations were formed on this assumption. The First Army was directed to stand on the Nied, to observe and even to reach the enemy, and the most forward corps of the Second Army were ordered to attain and master the Moselle, so that, in conjunction with the Third Army, they should be able to take part in the great movement, which was to send the French northward and to lay open Paris. The march, however, of the Second Army was a march across the front of a still power-



MARSHAL BAZAINE.

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ful foe, under the protection of a stronghold of the first order; and this flank march, to use technical language, was admirably screened by dense masses of horsemen, which covered all the approaches from Metz. On the supposition, however, that the French were at hand, two corps of the Second Army were moved to support the First Army, should it be assailed, and the combined forces were so placed that, in Moltke's judgment, they would possess the means of falling on their enemy in front and flank.

By this time the stress of opinion in the camps of the French had compelled the Emperor to give up his command. Marshal Bazaine, who had been already placed at the head of the army still in Lorraine, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th corps, the Imperial Guard, and the 6th corps just arrived at Metz, was nominated, on the 12th of August, Commander-in-Chief of the whole French army, including the corps of Macmahon, Failly, and Douay, the 1st, 5th, and 7th, on their way to Châlons. Every allowance ought to be made, in justice, for a general who, at a moment's notice, received a command in the grave straits in which the Marshal was even now placed, that is, who undertook to direct a defeated army, threatened by an enemy in overpowering strength, and separated from its supports by a wide distance; and if Bazaine, in the progress of events, was to prove himself the evil genius of France, his first operations are not to be harshly judged. It is remarkable indeed that, at the outset, the Marshal wished to adopt a course, which might have given the French arms a victory, nay,

have had a marked effect on events, had he followed it up with boldness and energy. Moltke, we have seen, had left the First Army on the Nied, and had placed two corps sufficiently at hand, as he thought, to afford it aid in the event of an attack from Metz,[1] but this calculation was not accurate; had the French army fallen on the enemy, in collected force, on the 13th of August, it ought to have defeated the First Army before the two corps could have reached the field,[2] and Bazaine contemplated this very movement, though not probably fully aware of the facts, or of the advantage he might have won.

Indecision, however, and want of firmness of purpose, combined with indolence and dulness of mind, were the characteristics of Bazaine, as a chief, and he gave proof of these qualities from the first, though we repeat he is not yet to be lightly condemned. The Emperor, if no longer in command, still had the influence that belongs to a sovereign; he entreated the Marshal to fall back at once to conduct the army across the Moselle, and, leaving Metz, to hasten on to Verdun, with a view of reaching Châlons at last, and it is only just to remark that this was the advice of nearly all the French generals on the spot. The Marshal gave up his

[1] This is very clearly shown by General Derrécagaix, "La Guerre Moderne," ii. p. 57. A fault was, no doubt, left in the German cuirass.

[2] "L'Armée du Rhin" par le Maréchal Bazaine, p. 51; "Guerre de 1870," par l'ex-Maréchal Bazaine, p. 62. These works, the apologies of the unfortunate Marshal, are of little intrinsic merit, but deserve attention.

offensive project, he ordered an immediate retreat on Verdun, and, by the morning of the 14th of August, the French army was defiling through Metz, and passing the Moselle on its way to the Meuse. The march was halting and slow in the extreme, the columns were delayed and entangled as they wound through the streets and alleys of the town; the mass of the impedimenta was immense, but though Bazaine[1] has been severely censured for not having bridged the Moselle more fully to expedite the march of his troops,[2] the charge appears to be not justified. It was otherwise certainly when the army had begun to get clear of Metz and its hindrances, and had crossed the Moselle to continue the retreat. Two main roads led from Metz to Verdun, one by Gravelotte, and thence in two large branches, by Mars La Tour, Woevre, and to the north by Etain, the other still further north, by Briey, and lesser roads ran into these great avenues from many points of the town and the fortress. The Marshal, however, crowded his whole army on the single main road, forming one line only, until it divides into two at Gravelotte; he made little or no use of the secondary roads, and obviously this was a palpable error, for the retrograde movement was delayed for hours, when celerity was of supreme importance.

By the afternoon of the 14th of August, consider-

[1] See the Report of General Rivière, p. 22. This report, however, is really the official indictment of Bazaine at his trial, and is charged with every kind of accusation, true or not.

[2] "L'Armée du Rhin," p. 48; "Guerre de 1870," p. 61.

ably less than half of the French army had crossed the Moselle and reached the west of Metz. But the clouds of dust which announced the retreat, and the reports of patrols and perhaps of spies, had attracted the attention of the generals of the First Army placed, we have seen, by Moltke on the Nied; and just as had happened at Wörth and Spicheren, these leaders resolved to attack the enemy before waiting for the direction of the general-in-chief. At about 5 p.m. two Prussian divisions had advanced along the main roads from the Sarre to Metz, on Colombey and Nouilly and the outposts of the French, and an extending line of fire marked the course of a battle along the eastern front of the great neighbouring stronghold. The French seem to have been almost surprised, and the enemy threw them back for a time, taking possession of more than one point of vantage, but they really were superior in force at first; and parts of the 3rd and 4th corps, commanded by Generals Decaen and L'Admirault, had ere long brought the assailants to a stand. A furious conflict now raged for a time, marked by the usual feature of these engagements, the ascendancy of the Prussian guns, and the superiority of the French rifle, and Bazaine, who had hastened to the spot, showed considerable skill in directing his troops, though he did not employ his great reserves at hand. The arrival at last of another Prussian division, and of the advanced guard of one of the two corps which had been placed to support the First Army, compelled,

however, the Marshal to retreat at nightfall, and the French retired slowly under the guns of Metz. They had not been defeated from a tactical point of view; the battle in fact was drawn, as a mere passage of arms, and the Germans had suffered far the most heavy loss, 5000 compared to 3400 men.

Bazaine had been a good soldier in this fierce encounter, and had even inspired his disheartened troops with confidence. But he had shown want of capacity as a general-in-chief, and he had missed an occasion which he might have seized. The Guard, and part of the 2nd French corps, were on the spot, and had he sent this formidable reserve to the aid of the 3rd and the 4th corps he must have defeated the Prussian divisions, and possibly[1] have even beaten the First Army in detail. He was, however, a man of weak half measures, like most inert and incompetent chiefs; he never thought of recurring to his former design, and though he might have attacked with a fair prospect of success, he was satisfied when he had merely kept back the enemy. Moltke, on the other hand, drew fruitful results from this hard-fought and prolonged battle, known as Colombey Nouilly or Borny. He had not probably wished the blow to be struck, though he had made preparations for an event of the kind, but the conflict had still further retarded the slow retreat of the French from Metz; and he saw an opportunity, owing to this delay, of inter-

[1] See V. D., "Guerre de 1870," p. 215, and authorities cited in note.

cepting Bazaine on his march, and of striking him before he could reach Verdun; success in this operation being a further step in the fundamental scheme of his strategy, to force the enemy northward and to expose Paris. By this time a part of the Second Army, the movement masked, we have seen, by cavalry, had taken possession of the line of the Moselle, between Dieulouard and Pont a Mousson, at no considerable distance from Metz, and the remaining corps, save one, was at hand. Moltke's orders were issued on the 15th of August; the First Army was to approach the Moselle, drawing near the southern part of Metz, and leaving one corps in observation in the rear, and the great mass of the Second Army was to press forward westwards, and, having passed the Moselle, was to endeavour to close on the line of the enemy's retreat and to cut him off from Verdun and the Meuse.

This contrast between the remissness of Bazaine and the insight and energy of his antagonist must be evident to every student of war. The Germans, meanwhile, had been advancing even before Moltke's arrangements were complete, and throughout the 15th of August they had been gathering on the Moselle. By the evening of that day the First Army, the right wing of the immense invasion, had two corps, the 8th and the 7th, near the region between the Moselle and its feeder, the Seille, the attendant cavalry approaching Metz, and one corps only, the 1st, was in the rear. The Second Army, the centre, having a single corps, the 2nd, not yet

come into line, and communicating on the left by one corps, the 4th, with the Third Army, the left wing, round Nancy, had five corps ready for the great march westwards, the 3rd, the 10th; the Guards, the 9th and the 12th, this colossal force being on either bank of the Moselle; and everything had been prepared for the decisive movement, next day, to intercept the retreating enemy. Here, however, a great mistake was made, which might have been followed by evil results. Moltke had wished that the mass of the Second Army should sweep circuitously round on the retiring French, holding the various roads from Metz to Verdun; in this way they would surely be cut off, and compelled to fight a disastrous battle. Prince Frederick Charles, however, the chief of the Second Army, seems to have thought that this movement would be too late, and that Bazaine was already not far from the Meuse, and, modifying the general orders he had received, he despatched one corps, the 3rd, towards the main road leading to Verdun, by Mars La Tour, and he sent another, the 10th, in the same direction, but at a considerable distance to the left. The object of these operations was, no doubt, to pursue Bazaine, to press on his rear, and to force him to stand at bay and to fight; and as the Prince communicated, at least in part, the new dispositions he had made to the headquarters at Pont a Mousson, Moltke, in some measure perhaps, was accountable for them.[1]

[1] That this is a fairly accurate account of these operations,

The advanced patrols of the German cavalry, exploring far beyond the bodies in the rear, had approached Mars La Tour on the 15th of August, and had met and defeated some squadrons of French horsemen. By the morning of the 16th the 3rd Prussian corps had drawn near the great road from Metz to Verdun, by Mars La Tour, as had been directed, and the 10th was on the way by Thiaucourt, nearly half a march distant. Meanwhile the French army, under Bazaine, had been continuing its retreat from Metz, but its movements had been more than ever slow. The battle of the 14th had greatly retarded its advance; the masses of troops, collected on a single road, and the huge trains of supplies and munitions had proceeded almost at a snail's pace, and the 4th corps had been compelled to follow the northern road, towards Briey, in order to avoid confusion. The retreat, indeed, had been much more tedious than the German commanders could have supposed, and Prince Frederick Charles had been deceived when he had heard that his enemy was near the Meuse. On the morning of the 16th the retiring army was still but a short way from Metz, the left wing and centre, the Guard, the 2nd and the 6th corps being around the great road by Mars La Tour, from Rezonville, and Vion-

may, we think, be gathered from the "Prussian Staff History," vol. i. pp. 351, 355. Attempts have been made to show that Prince Frederick Charles was in no sense responsible, but these are certainly futile. The responsibility of Moltke is much more doubtful, but may be, we believe, inferred.

ville, to Verneville northwards, the right wing, the 3rd and the 4th corps, being in the rear, northwards also, and but a few miles distant. The Emperor by this time had left the army—he had abandoned the helm of the imperilled ship—and his departure had removed the chief influence that had directed the French to seek Verdun and the Meuse. It would be absurd to charge Bazaine with the sinister conduct attributed to him, even at this time, by violent partisans and time-servers; but he had never approved of the march towards Verdun; he had a strange longing to stay around Metz, and when his master was gone he began to hesitate. He ordered a general halt for the forenoon of the 16th, ostensibly to enable his 3rd and 4th corps to come into line with the rest of the army, and he already looked back with regret, there can be little doubt, to the stronghold he had been induced to leave. The general result was that the French army, about 140,000 strong in the field, was collected within a space comparatively small, while a single Prussian corps, with another far off, was near this formidable mass, and within striking distance. Had Bazaine been a real commander, he ought to have swept his enemy, routed, from his path.

These operations led to the battle of Mars La Tour, one of the most memorable of the war of 1870-1, and perhaps the most glorious to the German arms. On the morning of the 16th of August, a body of Prussian cavalry, detached by

the chief of the 10th corps, and supported by a few thousand infantry, fell on a larger body of French horsemen, reconnoitring round the hamlet of Vionville on the great road by Mars La Tour, and put the enemy, discreditably surprised, to flight. Ere long a single division of the 3rd Prussian corps, one of the most distinguished of the Prussian army, had, obeying its orders, reached the scene; it was preceded by another division of horsemen, and its chief, Alvensleben, probably in the belief that he was in the presence of an enemy in retreat, attacked the 2nd French corps of Frossard, part of the left wing of Bazaine's forces. The attack was, for a time, repelled, but the second division of the 3rd corps had soon come to the aid of its comrades, and, after a protracted struggle, in which, as always, the German artillery had the advantage, the corps of Frossard, beaten at Spicheren, and diminished by a division left behind at Metz, was driven back on the reserves in the rear, and the villages of Vionville and Flavigny were lost. By this time Bazaine had appeared on the spot; he skilfully withdrew his shattered troops, and filled the gap that had been made in his line, with part of the Imperial Guard left carefully in the rear, and this movement, covered by a fine charge of horsemen, completely restored the Marshal's battle. Alvensleben, however, persisted in fighting what was evidently an army with his one corps, and before long, Canrobert and the 6th corps had fallen in force on the hard-pressed Germans. The unequal

contest was nobly maintained, but the approach of the 3rd French corps, now under Le Bœuf—its former chief had fallen on the 14th—compelled the 3rd corps to retreat by degrees, and probably it would have been severely worsted, but for the superiority of its well-served guns, and a magnificent effort made by the cavalry at hand. The Prussian squadrons, "courageous unto death," like the French at Wörth, charged the enemy drawing near, but more fortunate than the French at Wörth, though hardly stricken, they were not destroyed, and they extricated the infantry from what might have been ruin, had the French made a well combined attack.

The French army had, at first, been surprised, and the 2nd corps had been fairly beaten. Bazaine, too, had made no attempt to crush the single division which had dared to assail him, and the 6th and 3rd French corps arrived on the field, successively, and in a defensive attitude. At last, however, the French were in line, in overwhelming strength compcompared to their enemy, and the approach of the 4th corps of L'Admirault increased the huge preponderance of force. The Marshal was entreated to give orders for a general attack from Mars La Tour on his right, to Rezonville on his left, and had this been given nothing could have saved Alvensleben from a crushing defeat.[1] Bazaine, however, refused to advance; he kept the great body of the Guard inactive in the rear; he insisted that the 6th and 3rd corps should remain where they stood, and a

[1] "La Guerre Moderne," General Derrécagaix, vol. ii. p. 221.

great opportunity was, indisputably lost. At about four in the afternoon, the heads of the 10th Prussian corps appeared on the ground and sustained the 3rd, and before long the greater part of the main body hastened to the spot with the energetic good-will characteristic of the Prussian commanders, and in some measure redressed the balance of numbers. The 4th French corps, however, had come into line, and once more the pressure on the overmatched Germans became so intense, that they partly gave way, especially on their left near Mars La Tour. Another heroic effort of the Prussian cavalry, in which the French cavalry were driven from the field, succeeded in keeping the enemy back; but certainly the 10th corps would have been in the gravest peril, had its adversaries, instead of holding their ground, collected their forces for a determined attack. Meanwhile a single division of the 8th Prussian corps, and a fraction of the 9th, had come to the aid of the 3rd, still struggling against superior numbers, and the terrible strain was, to a certain extent, relieved. Night closed on a bloody and protracted conflict, in which a few thousand men, if largely reinforced by degrees, had defied and baffled a whole army for hours, and in which neither side could lay a claim to victory. The losses of the Germans and French were about equal, from 16,000 to 17,000 men.

The Prussians were not 25,000 strong in the first instance at Mars La Tour, and they seem at last to have been about 75,000. On the other hand

the French must have had more than 90,000 men on the field, and they might have had fully 120,000.[1] Yet, if we except the beaten troops of Frossard, the army of Bazaine fought extremely well, though the confidence of Wörth had passed away, and had been transferred to the German camp. The reasons that a very superior force failed to defeat, nay to rout, a much weaker enemy, are apparent on a survey of the battle. The daring offensive assumed by the 3rd Prussian corps, the arrival of the 10th corps late, and the noble self-sacrifice of the Prussian cavalry, could not have deprived the French of a victory had Bazaine simply put forth his strength, and boldly attacked with his greatly more powerful forces. Inactive, halting in mind, and ever clinging to Metz, he kept his army passively on the spot, and would not allow it to seize success when before it, and he threw away one of the best chances ever offered to a soldier by fortune. Nothing, on the contrary, could have been finer than the tenacity and daring of the undaunted Germans; and their leaders displayed their wonted energy, and gave each other, as usual, cordial support. Yet the conduct of Alvensleben in risking the attack, and especially on persisting in it, must be pronounced excessively rash, though it is very remarkable it received the approval of his superiors after the event. In truth he was less to blame than

[1] This estimate has been formed after a comparison of many authorities. The figures given by V. D., "Guerre de 1870," are grossly wrong.

Prince Frederick Charles, who, we have seen, had, probably owing to false reports, diverted the 3rd and 10th corps from the positions they were intended to take, and had placed them too near the French army, with orders probably to attack, on the supposition that it was far from Metz, and was approaching the Meuse in hasty retreat. Moltke was not responsible, at least at first, for what was an undoubted error, but he seems, we think, to have acquiesced in it, and if he did, all that can be said is that errors of this kind are inevitable in war.

The French army passed the night on the field, exhausted, and without orders from its chief. The Germans expected to be attacked on the morning of the 17th, and sent forward every available man and horse, and had Bazaine been a capable leader, he might possibly even yet have brushed aside his enemy, and made good his retreat to the Meuse. This operation, however, would have been at best of doubtful, perhaps of disastrous, result, and he might have made a much grander move had he possessed energy, resource and insight. He was still in the neighbourhood of a vast fortress, with ample passages over a large river, an admirable position to make his army secure, and to prepare it for a great offensive effort; and the communications of the Germans from the Rhine to the Moselle had been left exposed by their rapid advance to cut him off from the Meuse and Verdun. On the 17th of August one corps only of the First Army was to

the east of Metz, five corps of the Second Army were far to the west, and even the last corps, the 2nd, was on the Moselle, with directions to hasten towards the main body, and the Third Army was beyond Nancy, its chiefs thinking of a march on Châlons. Had Bazaine, therefore, withdrawn his forces with secrecy and swiftness into Metz, and issued from the fortress on the 18th of August, along the great roads leading to the Nied and the Upper Sarre, he might have overwhelmed the single hostile corps in his path, have seized, ravaged and cut in two the communications of his foes, and very possibly have raised the siege of Strasbourg. The Germans could not have had time to retrace their steps, and to ward off a tremendous stroke, and the Marshal, grasping the invaders, so to speak, by the back, would probably have gained important success and have retarded the German march for weeks, and would almost certainly have saved himself and his army.[1] By a manœuvre somewhat analogous, but of far more risk, the youthful Bonaparte turned defeat into victory, when, beaten at Caldiero, he marched through Verona, and, crossing the Adige, fell on Alvinzi's flank, after a fierce struggle on the dykes of Arcola.

[1] This movement occurred to more than one French officer at the time, "Metz Campagne et negotiations," p. 111, and has been indicated by a series of writers. The problem has been admirably worked out by General Hamley, "Operations of War," pp. 329, 332, ed. 1889. The "Prussian Staff History" and Moltke maintain a most suggestive silence.

The buzzard, however, is not the eagle, and Bazaine was not equal to an effort of this kind. He was a soldier, however, of some tactical skill; he had great confidence, as his writings show, in the power of modern small-arms on the defensive; and he had, we have seen, a fixed idea to keep fast to Metz. Under these impressions, he drew back his army towards the fortress, on the 17th of August, after being many hours in inaction; he had abandoned the notion of a retreat on Verdun; and[1] there seems to be no foundation for his assertion that this was inevitable from want of munitions and supplies. His next step was to select a strong position in the vicinity of Metz, where he might await the impending onset of the German army, his belief being that, by tactics of this kind, he would repel and ultimately[2] wear out his enemy. Such a position was formed near the west of Metz, along a range of uplands, extending to the left, from the village of Rozerieulles to Roncourt on the right, and fronting the great roads which lead to the Meuse, by Gravelotte, Doncourt, and to the north by Briey. This line in some respects was formidable in the extreme; to the left it was protected by Metz; the stream of the Mance ran like a fosse before it; it afforded cover to reserves in the rear; and it was dotted with villages and large farm-houses which, nearly all, could be strongly fortified. Bazaine placed his four corps along this ground of vantage, a front of seven or eight miles in length;

[1] Rivière, "Report," pp. 36, 38. [2] "L'Armée du Rhin," p. 67.

the left, the 2nd, on either side of the great road from Metz to Gravelotte, the 3rd and 4th, the centre extending to Amanvillers; and the 6th, the right, reaching St. Privat and Roncourt. The various resources of the military art were employed to increase the means of defence; batteries were carefully placed to bear on the enemy; trenches and pits had been formed to shelter the infantry, and to afford ample scope to the deadly rifle; and every hamlet and building had been made an outwork to repel the weight of the German onset. But the Imperial Guard was reserved in the rear, around the western forts of Metz, with an evident purpose to cling to the place; and it was separated from the main army, and especially from the right wing, by a long interval of space.

This position was one of extreme strength for passive defence—a bad method in all ages, and especially so in modern war—but it had two marked and very grave defects. It afforded little facility for counter attacks at any point of the far extending line; and it was comparatively weak, at the extreme right, at Roncourt, a danger aggravated by the fact that the 6th corps of Canrobert had arrived from Châlons with but few sappers, and with hardly any tools to make field entrenchments. The Imperial Guard, too, was most wrongly placed, detached around Metz, and far from the army; and strategically the position of Bazaine was unsafe, for he was about to accept a battle with his back to the Rhine, and his communications with France cut

off, and a real defeat would be probably fatal. We pass from the French to the German camp, and to the operations of Moltke and his lieutenants. They had expected, we have said, an attack on the 17th, and had assembled all their forces at hand; but as the enemy made no sign, it was resolved to resume again a determined offensive, and to fall on Bazaine and his army as quickly as possible. To effect this purpose five corps of the Second Army were brought together, during the course of the day, and placed near the main road from Metz by Mars La Tour, from Flavigny on the right to Hannonville on the left; and the 2nd corps in the rear was ordered to come up. Meanwhile two corps of the First Army were collected on the right of the Second Army, and spread from Flavigny to the approaches to Metz; and one corps was left on the eastern bank of the Moselle, to make demonstrations against the fortress. Nine corps d'armée, therefore,[1] were to take part, more or less directly, in the great onslaught to be made on the weakened five corps of the French, and to stifle the enemy under sheer weight of numbers.

By this time, however, as had been seen before, contact with the French army had been lost, except at the point of the line near Metz, and this marked failing in Moltke's strategy was to be attended with grave results. On the morning of the 18th of

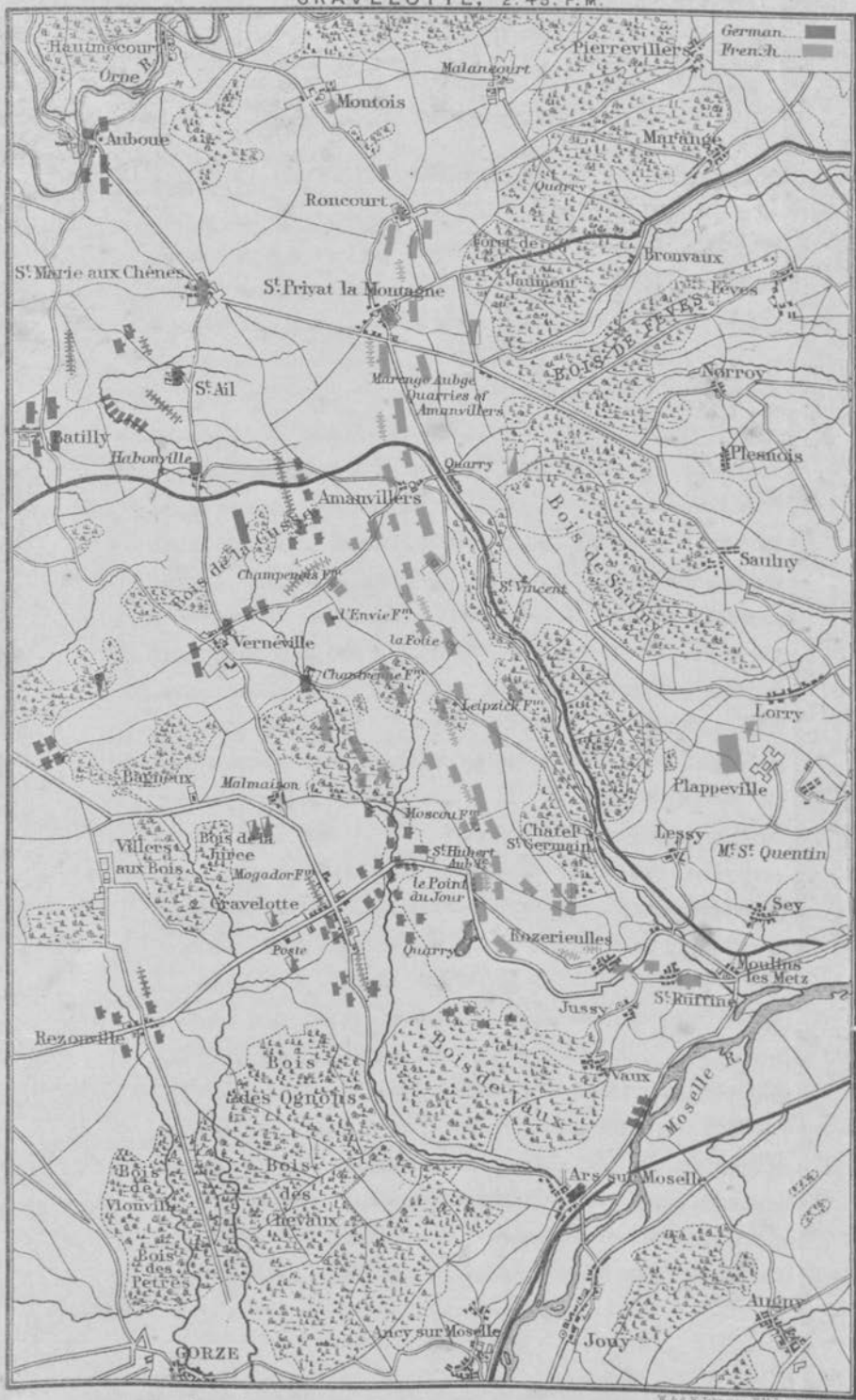
[1] The 3rd, 10th, 9th, 12th corps, with the Guards, of the Second Army, and the 2nd corps in the rear; the 7th and 8th corps of the First Army and the 1st beyond the Moselle.

August the German chiefs did not know where Bazaine was, and they were unable to direct the huge masses that spread along a front of nearly twelve miles, against the enemy, with any kind of certainty. Time, so precious in war, was lost, and Moltke's operations were at first tentative. The Second Army was moved northwards towards Doncourt, and even near to Briey, on the supposition that the French were trying to retreat by the northern roads that led to the Meuse, and the First Army was kept where it stood. As it might turn out, however, as was suspected, that Bazaine was still near Metz, orders were given that if this should be proved the case, the Second Army should make a great wheel eastwards, and fall on the enemy when attained; the First Army being made the pivot for this prolonged and circuitous movement. The Second Army was, therefore, at first sent in a direction far away from the French; and the morning was advanced when it became manifest that these were prepared to accept battle, in front of the west of Metz. Even then a remarkable mistake was made. Bazaine's right wing, which reached, we have seen, Roncourt, was reported as extending to Amanvillers only, that is to the ground held in force by the centre; and part of the Second Army was, at the first instance, directed towards Amanvillers chiefly, to outflank, as was supposed, the enemy. The great sweep was now made, and the German columns, admirably arrayed, marched, at intervals, over the space which separated them

from the French army. The movement, however, had been retarded; and, what obviously might become perilous, the exact position of Bazaine was not yet accurately known.[1]

The great battle of the 18th of August, given the name of Gravelotte by the victors, was the consequence of these dispositions on either side. At about noon, the 9th Prussian corps, its chief believing that he had attained the extreme right of Bazaine, had become engaged with the enemy's centre, from La Folie on the left, to Amanvillers on the right; and an order recommending him to pause in the attack, for the real situation of affairs was being discovered, arrived too late to make it safe to suspend the action. In this, as in so many instances, the French were, at first, surprised; and the assailants, screened by masses of woodland, gained ground, and captured some petty outposts. But when the Prussians drew near the main position, the result of their error became manifest; they were not outflanking the right of their foe, but striking his centre strongly entrenched; and they were engaged, in front, with L'Admirault's 4th corps, and with part of the 3rd corps of Le Bœuf, superior in numbers and well prepared for defence. The 9th corps bravely maintained the conflict; but the French guns, trained to search all vulnerable points, and the murderous fire of the French infantry,

[1] These operations should be carefully studied in the "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. pp. 1, 19, and in General Derrécagaix, "La Guerre Moderne," vol. ii. pp. 61, 67.


GRAVELOTTE, 2.45. P.M.
German
French
Hautmecourt
Orne R.
Pierrevillers
Malancourt
Montois
Auboue
Murange
Roncourt
Quarry
Bois de
Bronvaux
St. Marie aux Chênes
St. Privat la Montagne
Jaumont
Feves
BOIS DE FEVES
Norroy
St. Ail
Murange Auberge
Quarries of Amanvillers
Batilly
Habonville
Quarry
Plesnois
Amanvillers
Bois de la Cusse
Champenois Fm.
Bois de Saulny
St. Vincent
Saulny
L'Envie Fm.
Verneville
la Folie
Chantrenne Fm.
Leipzig Fm.
Lorry
Bruville
Malmaison
Plappeville
Moscou Fm.
Chapel St. Germain
Lessy
Villers aux Bois
Bois de la Jurée
St. Hubert Auberge
Mt. St. Quentin
Mogador Fm.
Gravelotte
le Point du Jour
Sey
Poste
Quarry
Rozerieulles
Moulins les Metz
Jussy
St. Ruffine
Rezonville
Bois des Ognons
Bois de Vaux
Vaux
Moselle R.
Bois de Vionville
Bois des Chevaux
Ars sur Moselle
Bois des Petres
Ancy
Ancy sur Moselle
Jouy
GORZE

fighting under shelter, and not to be reached, gave the troops of Bazaine an immense advantage, and the power of the Prussian artillery was not felt for a time. The Prussians in fact, though reinforced by degrees, might have been worsted had the French chiefs endeavoured to strike a bold counterstroke; and they were only relieved from peril by the 3rd corps, the heroes of Mars La Tour, hastening up from the rear. Meanwhile it had become certain that the right of Bazaine extended to Roncourt, that is miles beyond Amanvillers; and the Guard and the 12th corps, having come into line with the 9th corps, between 1 and 2 p.m., were directed to make a general movement towards St. Privat and Roncourt beyond, in order to turn and outflank the enemy. This circuitous march, through intricate ground, required several hours to make; but meanwhile, an outlying post of the French, the village of St. Marie, was successfully stormed by the 12th corps and the Prussian Guard. As nothing decisive, however, could be done until the great turning movement was well advanced, the battle on this side of the scene became for hours merely a contest of guns, in which the Prussian batteries, more numerous and with a better weapon, gained, by degrees, complete superiority over the French.

Such was the position of affairs, until late in the afternoon, on the left and left centre of the great German line, and on the corresponding right and right centre of Bazaine. Meantime, far away on the other side of the battle, a terrible conflict was

raging between the French left and left centre and the First Army. The 7th and 8th corps of the veteran Steinmetz, supported by part of the 1st corps, which threatened Metz from the east of the Moselle, and effected[1] a really powerful diversion, had come into action with the greatest part of the 3rd French corps, and the 2nd corps of Frossard, extending along the line of uplands, from La Folie to Rozerieulles. The onset of the assailants was bold and well sustained, but they encountered a stern and tenacious resistance; Frossard, an engineer, had made the defences along his front prodigiously strong, and the French infantry, hidden in pits and behind field trenches, wrought frightful havoc with their far-reaching small-arms. At last St. Hubert, an important out-post on the great road from Metz to Mars La Tour, was stormed after a bloody struggle; other fortified points appeared abandoned, and Steinmetz thought that the enemy was about to fall back from the position, beaten. He gave orders for a grand general attack in the close columns of the days of his youth, and it was then seen how tremendous are the effects of arms of precision in the hands of an enemy. The French had never thought of retreating; and the German masses, as they pressed forward along the main road and on either side of it, were devastated by a crushing fire, which mowed down the assailants in

[1] This was only a demonstration, but sufficient attention has not been directed to it. It made Bazaine cling to Metz more closely than ever, and possibly paralyzed the Imperial Guard.

heaps. An imprudent attack, in fact, altogether failed; the 7th and 8th Prussian corps were fairly beaten;[1] and had their enemy at this crisis boldly fallen on, the German right wing would have been imperilled, with results disastrous to the battle as a whole. Ere long, however, the 2nd Prussian corps, which had hastened forward by a forced march, relieved the stress on Steinmetz and his troops; and a counter-stroke, attempted late by the French, was feebly made and became fruitless. The position, however, of the First Army was critical until the close of the day, and the French retained their positions until the last moment, along this front of the long line of battle.

The contest, meanwhile, in the other part of the field, was going on with varying and long uncertain fortunes. After the capture of St. Marie, it had become, we have seen, a duel of guns, in order to enable the German masses to outflank the French right at St. Privat and Roncourt. At about 5 p.m. the battle began to rage again, and the weakened 9th corps made another attempt to advance and beat back the enemy's centre. The attack, however, was not successful; and, up to the last, the 3rd and 4th French corps had the advan-

[1] The Prussian Staff does not give an accurate or candid account of this episode of the battle. The defeat of the First Army is attested by many impartial witnesses on the spot. In fact Steinmetz, it is believed, at the express instance of Moltke, was dismissed from his command, and sent into honourable retirement.

tage over their baffled foes. The day was now far spent, and the evening at hand; the 12th, or Saxon corps, was gathering on Roncourt in its long and far-extending march, and the chiefs of the Prussian Guards deemed the time had come to make a determined attack on St. Privat, and to bring the desperate strife to a close. The effort, however, almost wholly failed; the assailants were struck down by a destructive fire issuing from all parts of the fortified village; and Canrobert and his men could boast with truth that the flower of the Prussian army perished under their blows. But, in the interval, the great turning movement was making itself felt on the French right; and the Saxon columns drew near Roncourt, to outflank Bazaine's position, and to make it untenable. Canrobert had foreseen the danger for hours; messenger after messenger had ridden to Bazaine entreating the assistance of the Imperial Guard, but the Marshal sent only a few guns, and a division, despatched afterwards, was too late. This conduct caused the loss of the battle; Canrobert drew back his already shattered corps from Roncourt, known to be a weak point, and, isolated and deserted, he endeavoured, for a time, to make head against the flood of his enemies. But the French were outnumbered more than two to one; the Saxons and the Guards drawing in towards each other stormed St. Privat after a furious struggle; Roncourt had already fallen into their hands, and the arrival of the 10th Prussian corps on the scene inclined still

further the balance of fortune. The French right was turned, as night fell on the scene; and the army of Bazaine by degrees retired from the positions they could no longer hold. The battle, however, was only just won, and the issue might easily have been very different. The losses of the Germans exceeded 20,000 men; those of the French were more than 12,000.

At Gravelotte more than 200,000[1] Germans, with from 700 to 800 guns, fought 120,000 or 130,000 Frenchmen, with certainly less than 500 guns.

[1] As usual, it is impossible to reconcile the conflicting estimates of the numbers engaged on either side at the battle of Gravelotte, but the above figures are, we believe, tolerably correct. An estimate made by Moltke in his "Précis of the Franco-German War," vol. i. p. 84, English translation, is wholly, nay grotesquely, erroneous. He says that only "seven corps faced the French;" and he puts their numbers at 178,818 men. But he does not include the 2nd Prussian corps, which reached the field late, but gave valuable support to the 7th and 8th corps, nor yet part of the 1st corps of the First Army, which threatened Metz from the eastern bank of the Moselle; and he thus omits fully 30,000. His calculations as to the French are even worse. He contends that "more than 180,000 French were engaged," because 173,000 were in Metz when the fortress fell. But this figure of 173,000 comprises the garrison of Metz, about 29,000 strong, a division of Frossard's corps, which was joined to the garrison, and a considerable assemblage of Gardes Mobiles, and franctireurs, not less than 20,000 men; and none of these troops, probably from 60,000 to 65,000 men, took part in the battle of Gravelotte. Even the Prussian Staff estimates Bazaine's forces at from 125,000 to 150,000 men only; Bazaine says they were 100,000; and General Hamley asserts that the French "were outnumbered two to one." The high character of Moltke repels the charge of disingenuousness, but statements like these are very unfortunate. The Précis, however, compiled at the age of 87, is a bad book.

The ultimate results of the battle were immense; but the splendour of the triumph that was yet to come ought not to blind the student of war to the character of the operations on either side. The great march of the German masses, in the morning of the 18th, was a very fine movement, remarkable for its precision and skill; the Prussian leaders supported each other with the energy and zeal habitual to them, and their troops gave proof of devoted courage. But grave mistakes were certainly made: the battle was begun rather too late; the French centre was assailed, instead of the right, at first; the grand attack of Steinmetz was almost reckless; the first attack on St. Privat was premature, and caused frightful losses; and it was a mere accident that, at the last moment, the great turning movement was attended with success. As the Germans were in overwhelming force, these results cannot be deemed remarkable; and had the battle been better directed the French should have been utterly routed. The errors, however, of the German leaders run up, more or less, to the first error that Bazaine's army had been lost sight of; this caused false marches, delay, and precipitate haste; and it is difficult to say that Moltke was not responsible, in some degree at least, for not having kept his enemy in view, a fault more than once to be ascribed to him. On the other hand, the French army had fought well, although in the first instance surprised, as happened repeatedly in the war; and the defence of St. Privat by Canrobert and his men

was an incident glorious to the arms of France. The loss of the battle, beyond question, was due to the incapacity and indolence of Bazaine. Roncourt was the most defenceless point in his line; and he ought to have placed the Imperial Guard near it, as has been justly observed [1] by the Prussian Staff. He kept, however, this great reserve around Metz, thinking only of his hold on the fortress, and probably alarmed by the demonstrations made by the enemy east of the Moselle; he remained inactive near the forts of Metz, and was not even on the field of battle; and he refused to send the Guard to the help of Canrobert, until a small reinforcement was sent too late. Had he made a proper use of this noble force, and despatched it at about 3 p.m. to his endangered right, St. Privat and Roncourt would not have been taken, and the Germans could not have gained a victory. The measure of his misdeeds, however, was not yet full; the cup was to overflow in disgrace and ruin.

By the 19th of August the army of Bazaine had fallen back from the lines they had held, and had been assembled under the forts of Metz, exhausted, indeed, but not desponding, for the soldiers knew they had fought a good fight against an enemy greatly superior in force. Nevertheless, that brave, but unfortunate army was to leave the fortress only as a mass of captives, victims of criminal neglect of duty and intrigue; and the curtain had fallen on the second act of the drama of the war of 1870-71.

[1] "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 7.

Moltke had steadily carried out his design, and had achieved more success than he had hoped to achieve; he had not exactly driven his enemy northwards, but he had compelled him to take refuge under the guns of Metz, whence he was not to make his escape; and the Third Army stood on the roads to Paris. He had worked out his plan with great strength of purpose, and with remarkable and unceasing energy; he had occasionally shown conspicuous skill, especially in the flank march to the Moselle; and his movement to intercept Bazaine and to cut him off from Verdun and the Meuse had been daring and well-conceived. The superiority, too, of the German armies, not in numbers only, but in efficiency in the field, had been established by new and convincing proofs, and the German generals had admirably worked together, if more than once they had been extremely rash.

The operations of Moltke, nevertheless, were not those of the highest genius in war, and were marked by errors that might have been made disastrous. The French army ought to have been crushed after Wörth and Spicheren; it was allowed ample time to effect its retreat, and it would have escaped had it been tolerably led. The disposition of the German corps on the 14th of August gave Bazaine a chance which he might well have seized, and Colombey Nouilly might have been a victory for France. On the 16th a comparatively small German force was opposed to an army at first three-fold in strength, and it is difficult to assert that, to some

extent at least, Moltke was not responsible for this mistake. The enemy was lost sight of on the 17th; false movements and delays were the consequence; an ill-conducted battle was fought, and victory was hardly won at last, large as was the preponderance of the German army; and here, Moltke, too, was probably in part to blame. Nor can it be forgotten that Bazaine was afforded a chance to sever the communications of his foe; and if we survey these operations as a whole, Moltke did not give proof during these eventful days of the dexterity, the resource, the art of seizing opportunities, and making the most of them, which are distinctive gifts of the greatest captains; and his success was largely due to the gross faults of his enemy. Still he rose more than once to a high level in war, and he showed some of the best qualities which characterize the most able leaders of armies.

Passing to the opposite side, the French army occasionally gave signs of loss of moral power, the natural result of ill leading and defeat, although the stand made by the 6th corps at St. Privat was an heroic exploit. In organization, however, in skill in manœuvre, in exploring, in military value, in a word, the French were inferior to their enemy, and sometimes they were shamefully surprised. It is unnecessary to dwell on their numerical weakness; and, in fact, had Napoleon been in the place of Moltke, they would have been annihilated, we believe, before Metz had been reached, and they would have never fought Mars la Tour and Gra-

velotte. The chief feature, however, of the French operations is the fatal vacillation and weakness of their chiefs. The Emperor advised the true course after the disastrous battles of Wörth and Spicheren, but he allowed supposed policy to master strategy; his ill-fated army was marched to and fro, and it lost the means of effecting its retreat to Châlons, conceded to it, so to speak, by Moltke. The conduct of Bazaine was infinitely worse; immensely inferior as he was in force, he had opportunities which might have saved his army, nay, have secured important success, had he known how to take advantage of them; but his inactivity, his blundering, his want of strength of character, made indignant Fortune turn aside from him, and he had already placed his army on the path to ruin.

We ought not to blame him for the events of the 14th, for he had only just assumed a most difficult command, but he might easily have won a victory at Mars la Tour, and after that indecisive battle he possessed the means of issuing out of Metz and breaking the communications of Moltke and of giving a wholly new turn to the war. His choice of standing at Gravelotte was strategically bad, but had he placed the Imperial Guard in its true position, or sent it in time to the help of Canrobert, he could not have lost that hard-fought battle, and his indolence and negligence on the field were fatal. It is lamentable to observe how he had no insight; how he wavered from one false move to another; how aimless and feeble his operations were; and if

he had a fixed idea to cling to Metz, this was not to make use of the great fortress, as a real general would have made use of it, but as a mere place of refuge in a tempest he feared. Worse, far worse, was yet to be witnessed; but already Bazaine had sunk below the Soubises and Clermonts of the Seven Years' War.[1]

[1] The "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. pp. 165-7, very candidly admits the "many errors that were made proceeding from uncertainty as to the enemy's intentions," and enumerates them in detail. As to the operations of Bazaine, the writer observes, "there were phases in the contest, in which, a will on the French side, penetrated with an appreciation of the situation, and energetically applied with singleness of purpose, might have secured many advantages." These comments are probably from the pen of Moltke.

CHAPTER VI.

The results of Gravelotte—Formation of the Army of the Meuse and investment of Metz—Inaction of Bazaine—Opportunity still perhaps open to him—Advance of the Third Army—Formation of the Army of Châlons under Macmahon—He assents to a project to march on Metz for the relief of Bazaine—Folly of this plan—The Army of Châlons on the march—Fine project of Moltke to intercept this movement—Slow progress of the Army of Châlons—Macmahon, though aware of the danger, yields to advice from Paris and persists in the march—The German armies reach their enemy—Action of Nouart—Battle of Beaumont—Macmahon misses an opportunity of escape—The Army of Châlons at Sedan—Advance and night march of the German armies—Battle of Sedan and destruction of the Army of Châlons—Conduct of Moltke at the capitulation—Reflections on these operations.

GRAVELOTTE, we have said, had accomplished more than Moltke had had reason to expect. The French had not been driven towards the north, but, indecisive as the battle had been, Bazaine and his army had fallen back on Metz, and showed, for the present, no signs of life. The second part, too, of the plan of the German chief was being realized with the fairest promise. The Third Army held the approaches to Paris, and nothing stood between it and the capital of France, but an assemblage of levies being combined with the beaten troops of Macmahon and Failly, in the neighbourhood of

Châlons and its great camp. A new distribution of the German armies was made, with a view, in the first instance, to an advance on Paris, and to annihilating the army being formed at Châlons; and Moltke's arrangements were carried out with the decision and energy characteristic of him. Two corps, the Guards and the Saxon 12th, were detached from the forces that had fought at Gravelotte, and, united with the 4th which, we have seen, had been in communication with the Third Army, were given the name of the Army of the Meuse; and this army, from 80,000 to 100,000[1] strong, was ordered to press forward to the Meuse, and, forming the right wing of the Third Army, to take part in the intended march on Paris. This was a far-sighted and very able move, attended ultimately with great results; for the Army of the Meuse, directed in this way, not only secured to the Third Army an irresistible superiority of force, but interposed an impassable obstacle to an attempt to relieve the fortress of Metz. It constitutes, in fact, one of the best titles of Moltke to rank among great captains.

Bazaine, however, was within Metz, at the head of an army still formidable, of a large garrison, and

[1] Moltke, in his "Précis of the Franco-German War," vol. i. p. 86, English translation, says that the Army of the Meuse was "138,000 strong." This, however, must be an error of the printer; three corps, two greatly weakened at Gravelotte, could not have attained these numbers. The best estimate is from 80,000 to 100,000 men.

of other forces, and in possession of a great stronghold; and it was necessary to make things safe, with this enemy, before undertaking the march on the capital. Prince Frederick Charles was placed in command of the First Army, and of the remaining part of the Second—the other part had formed the Army of the Meuse—and Moltke had made preparations by the 20th of August for investing Metz, and hemming the French within lines to be thrown around the fortress. The operation was unexampled in war; a force from 150,000 to 180,000 strong was to surround a force scarcely inferior in numbers, reckoning all the troops under Bazaine's command, to isolate it, and to prevent its escape, though it held Metz, a vast entrenched camp, and the passages over a great river.[1] Yet the effort was made and proved successful; it might well have been deemed impossible, and it must have failed against a real general. Five corps d'armée, and part of a sixth, were placed along the western bank of the Moselle, not far from the tract which had been the scene of the terrible battle of the 18th, for Moltke seems to have been convinced that any attempt which Bazaine might make to break out would be made from the western side of the fortress,

[1] Moltke, "Précis of the Franco-German War," vol. p. i. 86, English translation, estimates the investing force at Metz at only 150,000 men; but this is much below every other estimate. Counting the garrison and all other forces, besides the regular army, Bazaine, even after Gravelotte, must have disposed of nearly 180,000 men at Metz.

that is, on his natural line of retreat. One corps, however, strengthened by a division from the reserve, by part of another corps, and by a body of horsemen, was alone placed on the eastern bank, and that over a wide space of from fifteen to twenty miles in extent; and this comparatively small force was the only obstacle, in this direction, in the way of Bazaine and his whole army. Meantime incessant exertions were made to strengthen the lines being drawn around Metz. Thousands of men were employed in breaking up roads, in constructing stockades, in throwing up entrenchments, and in placing batteries at available points, in order to repel an advancing enemy; and rapid communication was assured by the telegraph along the whole besieging circle. But the circumference of the lines exceeded thirty miles; and over the greater part of this space they were very weakly occupied.[1]

The investment of Metz, under these conditions, before the event, would have appeared hopeless. Bazaine, we repeat, held a first-rate fortress, and both banks of the wide Moselle; and, in addition to this immense advantage, he had a central position and interior lines at every point of the sphere of manœuvre. His army, too, apart from his other

[1] The corps investing Metz on the western bank of the Moselle were the 8th and part of the 7th of the First Army, and the 2nd, 10th, 3rd and 9th of the Second. On the eastern bank there were part of the 7th, the 1st, and one division of the reserve. To these should be added large bodies of cavalry on either bank.

forces, was still more than 100,000 strong;[1] it had not lost heart, and was eager to fight; and it is wholly untrue[2] that it was ill-provided with munitions and other requirements for the field. Bazaine, therefore, ought to have been able to hold the enemy in check with part of his forces; to concentrate the great mass of his army against the Germans spread on a wide circumference; to break through the investing lines, and to escape from Metz; and the experience of ages[3] confirms this inference. By this time, however, Moltke had had ample proof of the indolence and incapacity of his foe, and of his persistent resolve to cling to Metz; and, apart from the fact that it was crowned with success, the ex-

[1] This, indeed, is admitted by Bazaine himself, "L'Armée du Rhin," p. 76. General Deligny gives this account of the state of the army: "Armée de Metz," p. 12: "Son armée, demeurée intacte, avait conservé toute sa vitalité; sa confiance en sa valeur s'était même accrue de ce que, s'étant mesurée avec des forces très supérieures aux siennes, elle était chaque fois demeurée maîtresse du champ de bataille."

[2] Rivière, pp. 99-100: Procès Bazaine, p. 711.

[3] One of the most distinguished generals of the British army, who visited Metz after the war, more than once assured me that "200,000 Germans could not have shut up 100,000 Frenchmen within Metz, had Bazaine done his duty." A very able Belgian military critic, Major Vandevelde, remarks, "La Guerre de 1870-71," "Non-seulement le maréchal serait parvenu à se dégager, mais avec un peu d'intelligence et de savoir faire, il aurait pu prendre l'offensive contre l'armée du prince Frédéric Charles, et lui faire payer cher la difficile et téméraire enterprise de vouloir, avec une armée de 200 mille hommes en bloquer une de 180 mille dans un camp rétranché." The whole of these comments is too long to be quoted, but it deserves attention.

periment of hemming in Bazaine, hazardous as it was, may be fully justified. It was one of the occasions when it is legitimate to take liberties with a worthless antagonist.

Nevertheless, the disposition of the German forces around the fortress has been severely criticized; and it gave the Marshal a second grand chance, even after Gravelotte, to appeal to Fortune. Five and a half corps barred an exit from Metz along the western bank of the Moselle; but a force, equal to two corps only, and that spread over a wide space, closed the avenues along the eastern bank; and the great roads that lead to the Nied and the Sarre remained open for a time, and were never strongly held. Had Bazaine, accordingly, at any moment, before the investment was complete, that is, between the 20th and 27th of August—and even afterwards the move was possible—marched in this direction with his whole army, he ought easily to have overpowered the weak detachments that stood in his path, and to have made good his way from Metz to the south-east. The consequences must have been very great; in all probability he would have saved the bulk of his forces from impending peril; he might have fallen on the German communications with success, raised the siege of Strasbourg, and checked the invasion; he would almost certainly have averted frightful disasters, and he might have changed the whole position of affairs. The opportunity he had on the 18th of August, in a word, was given him once

more, if the conditions, doubtless, were less promising.[1]

A bold movement, however, of this kind did not cross the mind of Bazaine. He was bound, we shall see, by the strongest pledges that could bind a soldier, to endeavour to make a determined attempt to break out from Metz, in order to join a too generous colleague; but he maintained his attitude of passive defence, and devoted the week that followed Gravelotte to reorganizing his army, replenishing his magazines, and strengthening the fortifications of the place, which he never really intended to leave. We turn to the operations of the German armies engaged in carrying out the projected invasion. The Third Army, we have said, had filled the region around Lunéville and Nancy by the middle of August; it had soon broken up from the Upper

[1] Curiously enough, the Prussian Staff, which passes over without notice what Bazaine might have accomplished on the 18th of August, had he broken out from Metz, to the eastward, acknowledges that he might have been successful, had he adopted this course, even as late as the 31st, or the 1st of September. "Staff History," vol. ii. p. 533. The passage should be carefully studied. General Hamley, "Operations of War," p. 332, ed. 1889, significantly observes: "This opinion refers to a time (31st August) when the Germans had been for twelve days investing Metz. If the chances in favour of Bazaine's supposed attempt were, at that time, so great, how much greater would they have been on the 17th, when the Germans were scattered, and unprepared for resistance on that side." The simple truth is that the Prussian Staff is not always candid, and will not admit the many opportunities Moltke gave Bazaine—opportunities which, in our judgment, Napoleon might have made disastrous to the invaders. See also "Metz et negociations," pp. 111, 112

Moselle, and by the 19th its foremost divisions had passed the line of the Upper Meuse. This great array composed of five corps and a half, and numbering probably 160,000[1] men, had soon rolled into the plains of Champagne, approaching the valley of the Upper Marne; and it halted, for a moment, to effect its junction with the Army of the Meuse, which, we have seen, had been formed by Moltke and made its right wing. The two masses, perhaps 240,000 strong, had come into line by the 23rd; and spreading over the wide tract between Verdun on the Meuse, and St. Dizier on the Marne, moved slowly towards the great camp of Châlons, preceded by tens of thousands of horsemen. To overwhelm every hostile force on their path and then to march in triumph on Paris, was almost the only thought of their chiefs; and Paris, these believed, would, like Jericho, fall at the first blast of an enemy's trumpet. Attempts made to capture Verdun and Toul on the way, had, nevertheless, failed; but the huge waves of invasion rolled far beyond these petty obstacles without let or hindrance.

Meanwhile the remains of the army routed at Wörth, the greater part of the corps of Failly, and

[1] The Third Army was now composed of the 5th, 11th, and 6th Prussian, of the 1st and 2nd Bavarian corps, and of the Wurtemberg division. Moltke, "Précis of the Franco-German War," vol. i. p. 86, estimates the Third Army and the Army of the Meuse at 223,000 men; but this is considerably a less number than most other estimates.

the 7th corps of Douay, drawn in from Belfort, had, after a series of forced marches, assembled in the well-known camp of Châlons. The Government in Paris, of which the Empress was, for the present, the nominal head—she had been named Regent in her husband's absence—had, during these days, made earnest efforts to increase and strengthen this shattered force. A new corps, the 12th, composed in some measure of marines, hastily summoned from the fleet, had been formed and despatched from the capital; and several regiments, largely made up of untrained recruits and raw Gardes Mobiles, had been added. By the 2nd of August the collective array numbered from 130,000 to 140,000 men, with about 380 or 400 guns; and it was the only army of reserve which, for the time, France could fit out and send into the field, so defective was her organization for war. Macmahon was placed at the head of this force, for he had still power over the hearts of his men; and the unfortunate Emperor, just arrived from Metz, had become a companion-in-arms of the Marshal, though he made no attempt to direct his counsels. With the enthusiasm characteristic of the race, the troops gathered together in this way demanded to be led against the enemy; but any skilful observer could have easily seen that they were not equal to bold and decisive movements. The Army of Châlons, as it was called, was a bad army in every sense of the word; it was a medley of beaten soldiers and of rude levies; the marines, though good troops, were not accustomed to march-

ing, and the cavalry, except two or three regiments, were of little value, and had inferior horses. The organization and administration of the army, besides, was ill-arranged, and did not fulfil its functions; a deficiency of supplies was, from the first, apparent; and the discipline and temper of the soldiers was such as would not endure the stress of ill-fortune. The army, in a word, as an instrument of war, was feeble and, in every respect, imperfect.[1]

These considerations did not escape the experienced eye of the Duke of Magenta, and his first operations were in accordance with the military situation, and with true strategy. By the 20th of August he had become aware that Bazaine had not succeeded in his march on Verdun, and that his retreat was probably cut off; and he had positive information that two great hostile armies were on their way from the Meuse to the Marne. He had almost resolved to fall back on Paris, but as Bazaine might perhaps have got out of Metz, and might be on the march northwards, and as, in any case, it was

[1] The events that led to the catastrophe of Sedan begin from this point. The narrative of the Prussian Staff is by far the best; encumbered as it is with details, it is clear and masterly, and it bears plain traces of the hand of Moltke. The evidence given by Marshal Macmahon at the Enquête Parlementaire, should be carefully studied; it reveals in full completeness the character of the man, and his conduct as a general-in-chief. Valuable information will be found in the "Sedan" of General Ducrot, and the "Sedan" of General Wimpffen; in the work of Prince Bibesco, which especially describes the operations of the 7th corps of Douay, in the Apology of Failly, and in Vandevelde's "Guerre de 1870."

not advisable to fight a great battle in the plains of Châlons against an enemy immensely superior in strength, the Marshal determined to move on Rheims, where he would at once possess the means of retiring on Paris, would approach Bazaine, should he be on the way from Metz, would avoid a probably fatal conflict, and would hold a favourable and strong position, hanging on the flank of the German invasion. This was judicious and well conceived strategy; and had Macmahon held to his purpose, France would not have mourned a frightful disaster.

On the 21st the Marshal had attained Rheims;[1] the march of his army from Châlons had been slow and difficult, and this had given him proof of its inferior quality. His intention was declared on the following morning; he had obtained no intelligence from Bazaine, he was convinced that Metz was being besieged; the Army of the Meuse and the Third Army were drawing near in irresistible force; and he "vehemently insisted" that "the only thing to be done" was to retreat on the capital as soon as possible. He had prepared his orders for the movement on the 23rd, a movement which, as Moltke has remarked, was the only judicious step[2] as affairs stood, a movement we will add, which, if carried out, would have completely changed the course of

[1] Enquête Parlementaire.

[2] "Précis of Franco-German War," vol. i. p. 90; "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 185. It has been argued that Macmahon ought to have marched southwards, and relieved Bazaine in that direction. But the Army of Châlons was unequal to any such movement.

the war, and would probably have saved Alsace and Lorraine. But at this momentous juncture the fatal influence, which had already had such disastrous effects, began to interfere with common-sense and prudence; and an accident completed the resulting mischief. Rouher, a servant of the Empire, had come to Rheims; he entreated Macmahon to advance on Metz to relieve Bazaine, and not to approach Paris; and this evil counsel was probably largely due to fear of the Parisian populace, and to a regard for a government already in peril. Macmahon "resisted stiffly" at first; he gave unanswerable reasons against the proposed movement, and even a message from the men in power at the Tuileries did not affect, for some hours, his purpose, that military rules should not yield to reasons of State. At last, however, a calamitous chance changed a resolve, perhaps even now faltering, that ought to have been inflexibly fixed. Bazaine, we have seen, had not been on the field of battle of the 18th August; he appears not to have fully ascertained the results even by the next day, and he sent on the 19th a despatch to Macmahon, announcing, though in ambiguous terms, "that he hoped" to retreat northwards to reach Montmédy, and "thence to descend from Mézières on Châlons." This message was received by Macmahon late on the 22nd; the Marshal saw in it a clear announcement that his colleague was on his way to join him; he was already divided in mind and wavering, and, in an evil hour for France and himself, he countermanded

his previous orders, and directed his army to move eastwards, in the hope of meeting Bazaine on the Meuse. Napoleon III., it is only just to add, in no way interfered with the misguided chief.[1]

This project of Macmahon may be described as one of the most fatal ever made in war. At this moment the Army of the Meuse and the Third Army were spread along a front of nearly fifty miles in width, on the edge of Champagne: they were in numbers almost two-fold the Army of Châlons; they were infinitely superior in military worth; and the Army of the Meuse was much nearer the river than the French, while the Third Army was only three marches distant. Macmahon, therefore, in advancing to the succour of Bazaine—and he was well informed of his enemy's strength and positions—proposed to execute a march along an arc of from eighty to a hundred miles in extent, of which his adversary held at most points the chord, and was, even now, almost within striking distance; and he proposed to do this with a bad army, completely unable to cope with its foe, and in a situation in which a defeat would probably force it over the Belgian frontier. Speaking technically, this was a flank march of the most perilous and reckless kind to be attempted with all the chances against it, and to be attempted, too, when even a check would almost.

[1] The conduct of Macmahon, at this memorable crisis, appears fully from his own evidence in the Enquête Parlementaire. It is a striking illustration of the old confession, "Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor."

certainly involve ruin. Except on the absurd assumption that the German commanders were shallow fools, who could not deal with an insensate movement, the prospect of success was almost hopeless, and the prospect of disaster was self-evident to any one versed in the operations of war.[1]

Yet even these were not the chief reasons why this calamitous movement ought not to have been made. The Army of Châlons was the last hope of France; ill-organized as it was, it might become the nucleus, if husbanded, of very large forces, should France be given time to collect her strength; and it could be really formidable in a good defensive position. Every consideration, therefore, should have compelled the Duke of Magenta to retreat on Paris, as he had first intended; the capital was already a powerful fortress, and could easily be made a great entrenched camp; it was the centre on which the national levies could be most readily and quickly assembled; and the Army of Châlons could hope to resist the Germans behind its forts and its ramparts. Had the Marshal taken this, the only rational course—Moltke has pointed this out with repeated emphasis—we shall not assert that he

[1] One or two soldiers, carried away by Crimean sympathies, have attempted to justify Macmahon's march; but their arguments cannot bear examination. The weight of well-informed opinion against this fatal movement is overwhelming; and I can say, for myself, that the moment I was apprised of it, a week before Sedan, I telegraphed to one of the best judges, of men and things, in Europe, "That army is lost." Prince Bibesco condemns the march as "insane," pp. 80, 81.

would have moved with the success of the youthful Bonaparte around Mantua, or have made Paris a Torres Vedras; but the events of the war entitle us to say that the capital of France would not have fallen, and the treaty of Frankfort would have never been signed.[1]

Macmahon, however, a hero in the field, was essentially a weak man of Quixotic nature; and partly from a generous wish to assist a comrade, and partly from a desire to support the Government, he "consented, saying he would not consent," and began the calamitous advance to the Meuse. Celerity, he knew, was his only chance; and the four corps of the Army of Châlons, the 1st under Ducrot, the 5th of Failly, the 7th of Douay, and the improvised 12th of Lebrun, were directed on the 23rd by a forced march to the line of the Suippe, a tributary of the Aisne. The movement, through a comparatively open country, was[2] rapid in the extreme and full of promise, and officers and soldiers looked joyfully forward to a speedy junction with the Army of Bazaine. At this point, however, the bad organization of the Army of Châlons became

[1] Some of the authorities against Macmahon's march will be found in General Pierron's work, "Stratégie et grande Tactique," vol. i. pp. 79, 80. The opinion, however, ascribed to "un officier général anglais," is almost a verbatim copy of an extract from "The Campaign of 1870-1," republished from *The Times*, by Bentley; and this work was written by a civilian.

[2] Bibesco, p. 84: "Nous avions en deux jours franchi une détour d'au moins 60 kilomètres, ce qui est enorme pour une agglomeration aussi nombreuse."

apparent, and the absence of preparation for a great movement eastwards had a disastrous effect on the operations in hand.[1] The forced march had fatigued and harassed the troops, the plains were crowded with stragglers and impedimenta in the rear, and there was a deficiency of supplies of almost every kind. Macmahon was compelled to turn northwards, to halt at Rêthel in order to rally his men and to find the means to give them support, and two days were almost wholly lost. By the 25th of August the Army of Châlons was but a short distance from the Aisne, filling the country between Rêthel and Vouziers, and still nearly fifty miles from the Meuse. The bearing of the soldiery was of evil omen; short-lived excitement had died away, disorder and confusion were seen everywhere, and signs of insubordination and even of mutiny were visible among the young levies. The region to be passed through was, besides, difficult; it was intersected by good main roads, but it was dense with masses of forest and woodland, and made intricate in places by long defiles.

While the Army of Châlons was being thus delayed the two German armies had continued their march. The cavalry exploring the great plains in their front had ascertained, by the 24th of August, that the French had left Châlons and had moved on Rheims; a letter had been intercepted disclosing the news that Macmahon was on his way to Metz, and a general officer of rank had expressed his

[1] Enquête Parlementaire.

opinion at a Council of War, that the Army of Châlons was on its way to relieve Bazaine. This intelligence was confirmed by various reports and by the telegraph on the following day; and Moltke, though still doubting whether the enemy would venture on an operation of reckless folly, gradually made up his mind[1] "that political requirements might have outweighed all military considerations," and that the French were on their way to the Meuse.

It had thus become necessary to guard against the supposed junction of Macmahon and Bazaine, and Moltke's plan was formed with that decision and insight of which he repeatedly gave ample proof. Assuming that the French had marched from Rheims on the 24th, and had advanced rapidly, they might have crossed the Meuse before they could be reached; but the Germans held the shorter lines on the theatre, and the enemy could not descend on Metz, nay, might be placed in extreme danger if precautions were taken to arrest his progress. To attain the object he had in view Moltke proposed that the Army of the Meuse, already gathered around the river, should cross it and move to the eastern bank; in the meantime, two corps were to be detached from Metz,[2] and to join hands with the Army of the Meuse; and the united forces were to take a position on the table-lands between the Meuse and the Moselle, between Damvillers and Longuyon

[1] "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 205.

[2] In theory this move would have been extremely hazardous; but Moltke had taken the measure of Bazaine.

and to fall on the approaching Army of Châlons. Meanwhile the Third Army was to advance northwards to occupy the roads between Rêthel and the Meuse, and to attain the flank and rear of Macmahon; and thus while the Marshal would be assailed in front by an army at least equal to his own in numbers, and very superior in real strength, his retreat might be completely cut off by an enemy in irresistible force. As, however, the facts were not yet quite known, orders were not issued for carrying out this plan, until the situation had been fully ascertained, as it, doubtless, would be on the 26th of August.

This design was masterly and admirably conceived, if extravagant praise has been lavished on it. It was rendered possible, it should be observed, by the direction given to the Army of the Meuse, after Gravelotte, in the first instance, and it is here that we perceive the foresight of Moltke. The German leader had not long to wait for the intelligence required to confirm his purpose. By the 26th of August the Army of Châlons had advanced some way into the intricate region that lies between the Aisne and the Meuse, and spread from Tourteron to Le Chêne and Vouziers; but the cavalry had not explored the country, and Douay's corps, the 7th, was around Vouziers, its flank covered on the right by a few horsemen only. The German squadrons, scouring the surrounding tracts, reached a hostile outpost not far from Grand Pré, and they had ere long ascertained that a large hostile army was in

the neighbourhood on the march eastward. The position of affairs had now been made clear; carrying out his project, Moltke directed two corps from Metz on Etain and Briey, and the 12th corps of the Army of the Meuse was pushed forward to seize the passages of the river at Stênay and Dun. At the same time the masses of the Third Army were moved northwards on a wide front by St. Ménéhould and Clermont en Argonne, to strike the line of Macmahon's march and fall on his exposed flank, the object of these movements being to intercept the Marshal upon his way to Metz, to defeat and, if possible, to destroy his army. On the 27th the German armies were in full motion, the telegraph connecting their operations as a whole, and their advance, if not rapid, was admirably arranged. Indeed, that they were able to execute an immense change of front in a few hours, and at a moment's notice, and that their huge columns, with their impedimenta in their train, succeeded in threading their difficult way through the wooded hills, the ravines, and the defiles of the Argonne—the theatre of the campaign of Valmy—is a most striking instance of the wonderful excellence their organization for war had attained, of the energy of the chiefs, and of the power of the soldiery.

While the Germans were approaching their foes, the Army of Châlons had made scarcely any progress. The apparition of hostile cavalry on his flank, followed by two or three sharp skirmishes, had alarmed Douay and brought him to a stand;

and Macmahon had ordered part of his army to descend on Vouziers, and support the 7th corps. As the enemy, however, made no attack in force, the Marshal countermanded the movement, and by the evening of the 27th his four corps, divided into two main columns, and at wide distances, were again on their way. They had not made, it should be observed, more than twenty miles from Rêthel in nearly four days; "erratic marches," as Moltke grimly remarked, "had been the result of counter-orders," and they were still nearly thirty miles from the Meuse, and eighty or ninety by the present route from Metz. On the night of the 27th Macmahon was convinced that the enterprise could only lead to disaster, and[1] he has acknowledged that the situation was plainly before him. He knew by this time that Bazaine was still within Metz; the last despatches, indeed,[2] received from the Marshal rather discountenanced the idea that he could join his colleague; he knew that the Army of the Meuse had crossed the river and was already barring his way to the fortress, and he knew that the Third Army was gathering on his track not less than "150,000 strong." In these circumstances the Marshal came to the only rational conclusion that

[1] Enquête Parlementaire. Bazaine, "Guerre de 1870," p. 135. Macmahon, with all his faults, is an honourable gentleman; and his evidence is transparently candid.

[2] This appears from Rivière, "Report," pp. 57, 59. Bazaine was deeply guilty, as we shall see, but many of the charges heaped upon him are far-fetched and absurd. He never meant, as has been insinuated, to attract Macmahon to Metz by false reports.

could be formed; he could not expect to reach Bazaine, and he was even now in imminent danger, and he gave orders for a retreat on Mézières next day, for he might hope to descend from that place by the valley of the Oise, with his army on Paris, Once more, however, the ill-fated chief succumbed to the influence which had proved so fatal to France in this disastrous war, and which he ought to have boldly spurned. A telegraphic message from Paris reached him at midnight; the Government adjured him to proceed to the Meuse, "for the desertion of Bazaine would cause a revolution;" he countermanded the movement on Mézières, and, perfectly aware that it was a fatal step, he undertook to attempt to continue the march on Metz. History can scarcely show another such instance of[1] criminal weakness on the part of a chief and of the disregard of military prudence to gain a political end.

Bellona, who brooks no rival, had been madly provoked, and a frightful catastrophe was to mark her vengeance. Macmahon, conscious that haste

[1] This may appear harsh language; but let us hear Napoleon on the subject, "Comment.," vol. i. p. 420, ed. 1867: "Un général-en-chef n'est pas a couvert par un ordre d'un ministre, ou d'un prince éloigné du champ d'operations, et connaissant mal, ou ne connaissant pas du tout, le dernier état des choses. Tout général-en-chef qui se charge d'exécuter un plan qu'il trouve mauvais et désastreux, est criminel." Macmahon required no inspiration but that of common sense; but he must have known how Napoleon had refused to obey the orders of the Directory to divide his army in Italy, and he may have read of Turenne's conduct in 1646.

was more than ever needful, gave orders for a forced march on the 28th, and, leaving his army in their present formations, directed his four corps to speed to the Meuse. But the weather had become[1] rainy and severe; conflicting orders had led to endless confusion; the French troops were in a dangerous mood, and the roads, strewn with impedimenta and disbanded men, gave presage already of coming disaster. The army divided into two great masses, made in the first instance for Mouzon and Stênay, by the main and other roads which traverse the district; the left wing, the 1st and 12th corps, moving by Le Chêne, Stonne, and La Besace, the right wing, the 7th and 5th corps, advancing by Boult aux Bois and Belval; and Macmahon, it is said, became hopeful after he had made his throw of a desperate gambler. Spite of every effort, however, the march was not rapid; the enemy had not appeared in strength, but he was known to be closing in on all sides, and the two French columns, already widely apart, began to separate at an increasing distance, for the 5th corps was harassed by hostile cavalry, and the 7th was burdened by an immense train of impedimenta extending[2] for miles. This interval was enlarged because Macmahon, having learned that the Germans held Stênay, had ordered the whole army to turn northwards towards

[1] "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 220. The tone of scorn in the passage is evident.

[2] Ibid. vol. ii. p. 243. The train is said to have been nine miles long.

Rémilly, Raucourt, and Mouzon; and[1] Failly, still on his way to Stênay, had not been apprised of this change of purpose. The 12th corps crossed the Meuse on the evening of the 29th, the 1st being not far in the rear; and thus the left wing of the Army of Châlons was for the time comparatively safe. But the right wing, that which was next the enemy, was isolated, unsupported, and exposed on its flank, and the 5th corps was running into its adversary's mouth.

The slow and tortuous march of the Army of Châlons had, in a certain measure, perplexed Moltke,[2] who had expected to strike it east of the Meuse. By the 29th of August, however, it had become evident that the enemy was still to the west of the stream, and new orders were issued to the German armies. The 12th corps of the Army of the Meuse was directed to return across the river, and to join the two corps which had not crossed it; the two corps detached from Metz were sent back; and the march of the Third Army was continued northward. A great battle was, perhaps, expected on the 30th or 31st, as the Germans were drawing in on their foes; but the movement of the 5th and of the 7th French corps, inclining towards the enemy, and away from their supports, precipitated the contest, and gave a new turn to affairs. On the 29th Failly had been sharply attacked by a hostile

[1] "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 230. The officer bearing Macmahon's order to Failly was taken prisoner.

[2] Ibid. vol. ii. p. 222.

division near Nouart. This warned him not to advance on Stênay, and he fell back on Beaumont, a small town near the banks of the Meuse, and not far from Mouzon. The place is an oasis amidst dense woodland; and on the morning of the 30th the French were surprised and assailed by the 4th corps of the Army of the Meuse, which had pressed forward. Failly,[1] not more to blame than other French chiefs repeatedly surprised in the same way, called his troops to arms, and made a stout defence; but Beaumont was before long captured, and the 5th corps was driven at last towards Mouzon, having narrowly escaped being forced into the Meuse. Its situation, indeed, had become so critical that part of the 12th French corps, which, we have seen, had got over the Meuse and lay around Mouzon, recrossed it, and tried to give aid to its comrades. A fierce struggle took place for a time, but the French at last were completely routed, and with difficulty fought their way across to Mouzon. Meanwhile, the 7th corps of Douay had been running the gauntlet of enemies gathering on its flank and rear. The troops, kept back by their great convoy, and losing men in hundreds, advanced slowly, and by nightfall on the 30th August they had only just reached the Meuse, seething with discontent, exhausted, and famished.

Macmahon, by this time, was east of the Meuse,

[1] Failly was unjustly made a scape-goat. His retreat from Bitche showed presence of mind and skill, and he fought well at Beaumont.

and had been contemplating a descent on Montmédy, and a march from that place to relieve Bazaine. His 1st corps had got safely over the Meuse, a few hours only, after the 12th, and he had pushed forward part of this corps to Carignan, in the valley of the Chiers, a long march from Montmédy. Extraordinary as it may appear, the French commander[1] believed that important success was at hand; and the unfortunate Emperor, who had followed in his train, sick, broken down, and letting things drift,[2] but taking no part in military affairs, had sent a message to his wife "that we are on the eve of victory." It is a proof how weakness can deceive itself that such a notion could have been entertained. The Army of Châlons was fifty miles from Metz, its retreat imperilled by the Third Army; the Army of the Meuse was hanging on its flank, and part actually on the way to bar its progress; the Army of Prince Frederick Charles stood in its way at Metz; and all this was perfectly well known by Macmahon. The terrible news of the rout of Failly and of part of the 12th and 7th French corps, soon known, dispelled the Marshal's delusion, and he gave immediate orders for a general retreat. Sedan, a fortress of the fourth order, on the Meuse, lay a few miles to the rear, and Mac-

[1] The emotional and somewhat shallow nature of Macmahon was exactly that which Napoleon has declared unfits a general for a great command, and was strikingly exemplified on this occasion.

[2] Napoleon III., however, had expressed his disapproval of the reckless march on the 28th.

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mahon directed the Army of Châlons to assemble round the place as a harbour of refuge. Throughout the night of the 30th, and the early morning of the 31st, the French columns were toiling painfully on their way, and they were drawn together near Sedan long before noon. The aspect of the army, however, was pitiable in the extreme; the 1st corps, still intact, had a martial bearing, but the appearance of the other three corps was alarming. There was a deficiency of supplies, and many men were starving; whole regiments were broken up and confused, stragglers spread over miles around in thousands, and sounds of mutiny and fear were heard in more than one camp.[1] Nevertheless, that army, as a whole, could fight, and could certainly march, if well directed.

It is at crises like these that a great chief, especially if he commands a French army, can do much to avert impending disaster. Not later than the early afternoon of the 31st Macmahon had his whole army in hand; and a French corps, the 13th, under General Vinoy, sent forward from Paris to

[1] An eye-witness gives this description of part of the army, the part, no doubt, that had suffered most. Wimpffen, "Sédan," p. 137 : "Un nombre considerable de fantassins marchaient sans ordre, et comme des tirailleurs, en grandes bandes, occupant une vaste surface. Je me hâtai de descendre dans la plaine pour arrêter ce désordre et interpeller ces fuyards. J'eu de la peine à m'en faire comprendre. En vain je leur criais : 'Mais, malheureux, regardez donc derrière vous, le canon de l'ennemi est encore loin. Vous n'avez rien à redouter.' Ils ne m'écoutaient pas dans leur course haletante.

support the Marshal, was near Mézières, only a march distant. At this time the Army of the Meuse was, in part, on the eastern bank of the river, in order to prevent a descent on Montmédy; the other parts were far off, on the western bank, and the Third Army was still a long way from Sedan, divided, too, from the place by the Meuse, the heads only of a Bavarian corps being near the fortress. The Germans, therefore, had not their enemy in their grasp; a retreat to the westward was still partly open, and had Macmahon formed at once a bold resolve, abandoned his bad and most enfeebled troops, left his heaviest impedimenta in Sedan, and broken down the bridges on the Meuse, he would probably have made good his way to Mézières, at the sacrifice of 20,000 or 30,000 men, but having saved three-fourths of his army. Napoleon, at the Beresina, was in a far worse plight; and yet history has recorded how that mighty warrior rescued his stricken troops from the extreme of peril, and baffled, by his marvellous resource, his astounded foes. Nor did the movement to Mézières escape the notice of judicious observers in the camp of the French; it was suggested, at least, by Napoleon III., and Ducrot, the leader of the 1st corps, a very able and experienced soldier,[1] had prepared for it even on the night of the 30th.

Genius and insight, however, were wanting to France in that calamitous hour of her destiny.

[1] Ducrot, "Sédan," pp. 10, 11. His remarks should be studied.

Macmahon[1] knew that he could not stay long at Sédan, but he did not wish to fall back on Mézières; he believed that he had time to give a day's rest to his troops. He thought the Germans more distant than they were, and his real intention was to resume, if possible, the march on Montmédy. He threw, therefore, away his one chance of safety; he lost the precious hours of the 31st; the roads to Mézières, and even to Sedan, were left open to the approaching enemy, for the chief bridges on the Meuse were not destroyed. A council of war—that clear token of weakness in command—came to no decision, and it was finally resolved to wait on events round Sedan. Vacillation and disregard of every principle of war were the characteristics of this fatal conduct, to be soon visited by a tremendous penalty. The only decided step taken by Macmahon was to replace Failly in his command by Wimpffen, an officer who had been despatched from Paris to succeed the Marshal in the event of his fall; and the choice was to prove, in many respects, unfortunate.

During all this time the two German armies had been gradually approaching Sedan. The great masses, however, had moved somewhat slowly, and until late on the 31st Moltke, who had not brought

[1] These conclusions follow from an impartial review of Macmahon's evidence at the Enquête Parlementaire. See also "Bibesco," p. 105; Wimpffen, "Sédan." The "Prussian Staff History" is in error in intimating, vol. ii. p. 292, that Macmahon wished to retreat on Mézières. The Marshal said exactly the reverse.

his enemy to bay, as he had, perhaps, hoped to do before, hardly expected that he could accomplish more than to drive Macmahon[1] over the Belgian frontier—that is, to disarm the Army of Châlons in a neutral's country. By the evening of the 31st the Army of the Meuse had completely closed the roads to Montmédy, and, having crossed the Meuse with all its divisions, held the tract between the river and the Chiers; but the Third Army was half a march from Sédan, though it had gradually drawn near the course of the Meuse, standing from the right to the left on a broad space,[2] and threatening Macmahon's retreat to Mézières. Moltke certainly expected that the French commander would attempt to effect his escape that way, and he had made preparations to cross the Meuse and to endeavour to force him, we have said, into Belgium, an event, however, by no means probable had Macmahon been a capable chief. But hours passed and the French made no sign; the advanced corps of the Third Army seized the principal bridges on the Meuse, left intact, we have seen, by neglect, and

[1] "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 290. The movements of Macmahon had puzzled the German commanders; they were so contrary to common sense. "I cannot understand," General Blümenthal, Chief of the Staff of the Third Army, said to a bystander, "what the Marshal is at." A very able military critic, equally perplexed, hazarded the surmise that Macmahon would march into Belgium, violate neutral territory, and re-enter France near Givet, making his escape in this way.

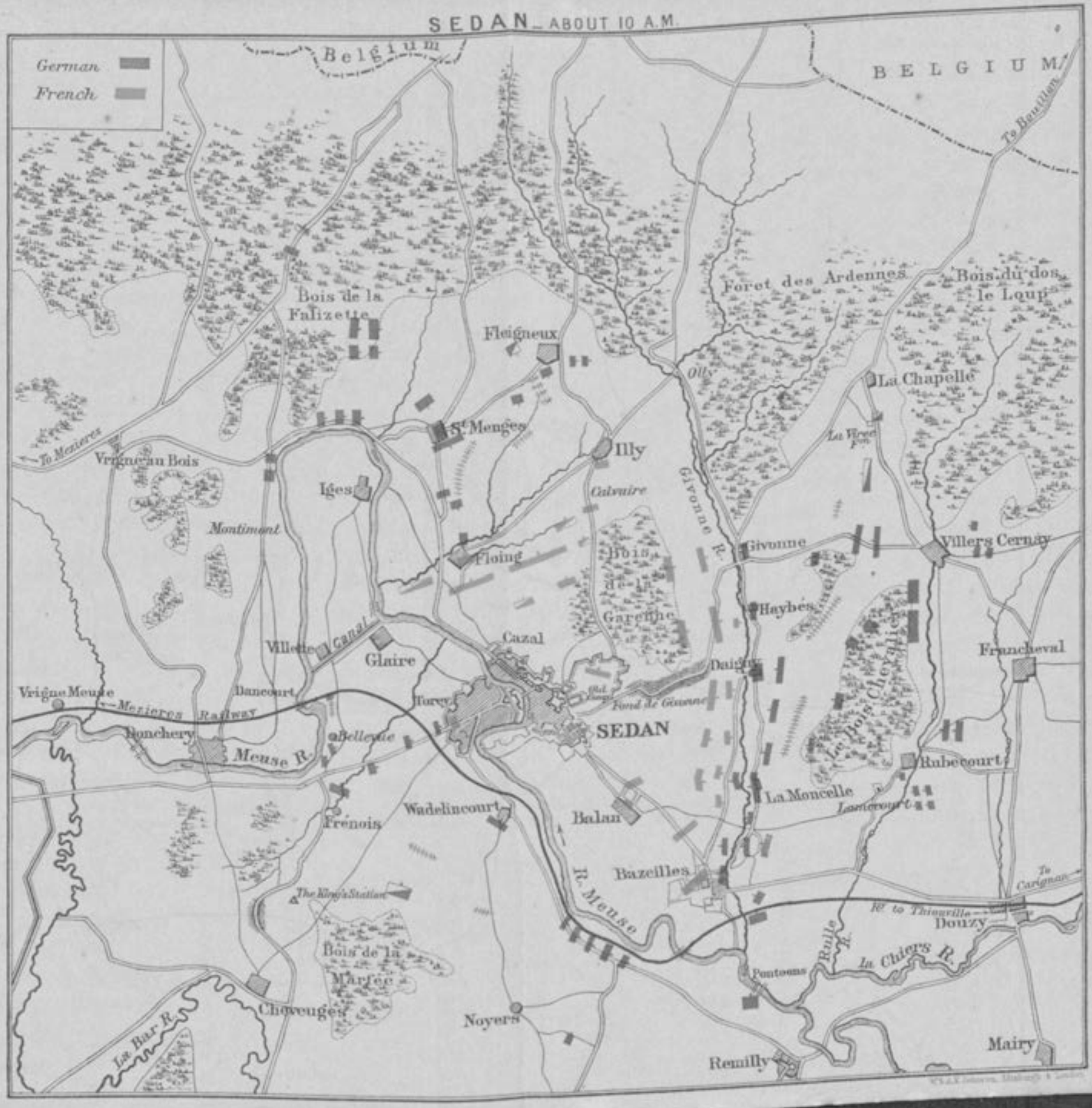
[2] The 6th corps of the Third Army was leagues in the rear, and west of Mézières.

as the Army of Châlons did not move from Sedan, Moltke saw that his enemy was within the toils, and that he could be hemmed in on Sedan and destroyed. Orders were issued for a great night march. The Army of the Meuse was to advance on the fortress, and to attack the French on its eastern front; the Third Army was to cross the Meuse, and, leaving a large force on the southern front, was to close on the enemy from the west; and the uniting masses were, like a huge serpent, to envelop and crush their doomed prey. By the early dawn the great columns were in motion, well led, well directed, and advancing steadily; and this movement, one of the most decisive ever made in war, was indisputably that of a great captain.

Macmahon, meanwhile, had arranged his army in a defensive position around Sedan, ready, if necessary, to meet the attack of his enemy. Strategically, the situation could hardly be worse; the French were close to the Belgian frontier, and a lost battle would entail ruin. But tactically the position was extremely strong, unless, as at Gravelotte, the Germans were in overwhelming force; and there is reason to think that the Marshal believed a large part of the Third Army distant. The fortress itself gave little protection; but north of it a tract extends, covered on every side by difficult obstacles, and the Army of Châlons held this ground of vantage, drawn up in a great semi-circle to resist an attack. The brook of the Givonne, with the adjoining villages of Bazeilles, La Moncelle, Daigny, and Givonne,

opposed a barrier on the east to the Germans, and Macmahon held this front with his 1st and 12th corps, the best parts of his enfeebled army. Few troops were needed on the southern and south-western fronts, for, not to speak of the artillery of Sedan, the Meuse ran along this whole space, forming a huge bend like a great double fosse, and the approaches on this side were made very intricate for miles by masses of dense woodland. On the northern and north-western fronts the ground was more open; but the hamlets of Floing, St. Menges, and Fleigneux afforded valuable points of defence; and the 7th corps was placed on this part of the field, assembled in a comparatively narrow space. The centre of the circumference thus closed or occupied was filled by the shattered 5th corps, the reserve of the three corps outside, and the position, we repeat, was, as a whole, formidable against an enemy not in immense numbers. But it afforded no facilities for counter attack, and hardly any means of retreat; it was "cramped," confined, and for this reason dangerous; it was commanded on the north by the heights of Illy, and should the Germans once gain this point of vantage, and especially should they unite upon it, a frightful disaster would certainly follow; the French army would have no power to escape, and would be precipitated into the lowlands around Sedan.

The memorable 1st of September had come; a day of woe and despair for France. It was still dark when the 1st Bavarian corps attacked Bazeilles,


SEDAN – ABOUT 10 A.M.
German
French
Belgium
BELGIUM
To Bouillon
Bois de la Falizette
Fleigneux
Foret des Ardennes
Bois du dos le Loup
La Chapelle
Olly
To Mezieres
Vrigne au Bois
St Menges
Illy
Iges
Calvaire
La Vrese
Givonne R.
Montimont
Floing
Givonne
Villers Cernay
Bois de la Garenne
Haybes
Cazal
Villette
Canal
Glaire
Francheval
Vrigne Meuse
Dancourt
Torcy
Daigny
Mezieres Railway
Bonchery
Meuse R.
Bellevue
Fond de Givonne
SEDAN
Le Bois Chevalier
Rubecourt
La Moncelle
Wadelincourt
Frenois
Balan
Bazeilles
The King's Station
R. Meuse
To Carignan
Rte to Thinqville
Douzy
Bois de la Marfee
Pontoons
Rulle R.
La Chiers R.
Chevenges
Noyers
La Bar R.
Remilly
Mairy

a suburb of Sedan, near where the Givonne falls into the Meuse. The 12th Saxon corps had soon come into line, and assailed the hamlets of La Moncelle and Daigny, and the thunder of battle rolled along the space which extends before the south-east of the fortress. The French made a most stubborn defence, the marines of Lebrun displaying heroic courage, and the chassepôt made its superiority felt in what was, in a great measure, a combat in streets. An unfortunate incident had already occurred; Macmahon, who had ridden to the front of the line, still hoping to find his way to Carignan, had been struck by the splinter of a shell, and he handed over the chief command to Ducrot, a lieutenant, in whom he justly placed confidence. Ducrot, we have seen, as far back as the 30th of August, had judged correctly that a retreat on Mézières was the only[1] chance of safety for the endangered French, and he instantly gave orders[2] that the whole army should fall back to the heights of Illy, and endeavour to force its way westwards. This movement could not have conjured away a disaster, but it might have saved a large part of the Army of Châlons; yet, at the supreme moment, it was arrested by interference, unwise and calamitous.

Wimpffen believed, like Macmahon, that the true

[1] "Opérer sa retraite sur ses renforts un des trois grandes règles de la guerre."—Napoleon.

[2] The "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. pp. 323-4, does not explain this clearly. Moltke, "Précis of Franco-German War," vol. i. p. 119, is quite accurate.

course to adopt was to attempt to break through the enemy in front, and, by Carignan, to advance on Montmédy; and, assuming the chief command after the Marshal's fall, he countermanded Ducrot's orders and directed the army to hold its gronnd. At this time the French still maintained their positions; they made repeated and vigorous efforts to fall on the Bavarians and Saxons, and so to force a passage and escape eastwards. But the 4th corps of the Army of the Meuse had reached the field about 9 a.m.; the Guards, who had had a long way to march, through a difficult and thickly wooded tract, had speedily joined in a general attack; the crushing fire of the Prussian batteries told decisively as the battle developed, and the pressure on the French proved impossible to withstand, as the line of fire became more intense, and spread on all sides as far as Givonne. By noon the line of the Givonne was lost; the hamlets on it had been stormed or abandoned; and the 1st and 12th corps were driven backward into the valley to the south and east of Sedan. They rallied in this position on a second line, but their situation was already critical in the extreme.

Ere long a tremendous storm had burst on the north-western front of the French ar my. The mass of the Third Army had marched through the night, and by the early morning the 5th and 11th corps, the Würtembergers being some distance to the left, had reached the Meuse, and were crossing the river. Besides the principal bridge of Donchery, artificial bridges had been made—a striking contrast to

Macmahon's negligence—for celerity was of supreme importance; and the Germans were arrayed on the northern bank at between 7 and 8 a.m. The march, however, to reach the position of the French was long, and retarded by many hindrances; the great bend of the Meuse closed part of the way; the country was thickly covered by wood, and it was nearly 11 a.m. before the first troops of the 11th corps had reached St. Menges and Fleigneux, advanced posts of the 7th corps of Douay. Batteries were pushed forward to support the infantry, but the 5th corps was not yet on the scene; the Würtembergers were far distant, observing the roads that led to Mézières, and this indicates that had Ducrot's orders, given between 7 and 8 a.m., been speedily and thoroughly carried out, the Army of Châlons might have, in part, escaped, even if assailed in flank by a victorious enemy, and probably in the rear by the Army of the Meuse. The 7th French corps met the enemy boldly, and even attempted counter attacks, but St. Menges and Fleigneux were scarcely defended, and after a fierce and protracted struggle, Floing was captured, and the triumphant Germans pressed towards and seized the heights of Illy, nearly joining hands with the advancing Guards, who had occupied, we have seen, Givonne. An iron circle was closing round the French, but their disaster was ennobled by a fine feat of arms. The few good cavalry of the Army of Châlons made a magnificent[1] effort to beat back the

[1] King William, who witnessed these heroic charges from a distant hill, exclaimed, "What splendid troops." The "Prussian

enemy, and, though they failed, some hundreds of these gallant horsemen contrived to effect their escape into Belgium.

It was now three in the afternoon, and nothing could save the defeated French from the coming doom. To the east and south-east, the troops of the 1st and 12th corps were gradually forced from their new positions, and were driven back on the ramparts of Sedan. To the north and north-east, the uniting columns of the Prussian Guards and of the 5th and 11th corps spread over the space from which Illy rises; and the routed 7th corps was scattered into the valley below. The south of the French position was closed by the Meuse and by the 2nd Bavarian corps, detached in the morning from the Third Army; and the converging enemies gathered in on the ruined host, pent in a narrow enclosure, like a flock for the slaughter. The 5th French corps shared in the universal wreck, and by five in the afternoon a huge coil had been drawn around an army still of 110,000 men. Every avenue of escape was barred; the cross-fire of 500 guns at least carried death and despair into shattered masses fast dissolving into chaotic multitudes; and the lost battle became a massacre. Yet even in this hour of appalling woe noble hearts rose superior

Staff," vol. ii. p. 375, and Moltke's "Précis of the Franco-German War," vol. i. p. 130, join in the tribute of admiration. General Gallifet, one of the leaders of these noble squadrons, survives, and is one of the most distinguished chiefs of the new army of France.

to Fortune. Wimpffen hastily collected a few thousand men and made a frantic effort to break through by Bazeilles; and little knots of fugitives, eluding their foes, made their way over the adjoining frontier. It is useless, however, to dwell on the struggles of caged animals caught in the trap of the hunter. The Army of Châlons soon ceased to exist,[1] and became a horde filling the approaches to Sédan, and crowding its streets with wounded men and stragglers. Scenes of hideous insubordination and fury closed a catastrophe without a parallel in war.

Napoleon III. had visited the field of battle on the morning of this great and terrible day. He was suffering, however, from a cruel disease, and was unable to keep his seat on horseback, and he witnessed from the interior of Sedan the appalling rout of the Army of Châlons. Towards the close of the day, when all hope had vanished, he very properly rejected the advice of Wimpffen, to put himself at the head of a handful of men and to endea-

[1] General Ducrôt, "Sédan," p. 48, gives us this description of the appearance of the town at the close of the struggle:—"A l'interieur de Sédan, le spectacle était indescriptible; les rues, les places, les portes étaient encombrées de voitures, de chariots, de canons, de tous les impedimenta et débris d'une armée en déroute. Des bandes de soldats, sans fusils, sans sacs, accouraient à tout moment, se jetaient dans les maisons, dans les églises. Aux portes de la ville on s'écrasait. Plusieurs malheureux perirent piétinés. A travers cette foule, accouraient des cavaliers ventre à terre, des caissons passaient au galop, se taillant un chemin au milieu de ces masses affalées."

vour to escape from a scene of horror, and he rightly ordered the white flag to be raised as a sign that all resistance had ceased, and that the time had come to stop useless and murderous carnage. Negotiations had soon begun at Donchery; Wimpffen, much against his will, represented the French, and Bismarck and Moltke were the envoys of the King of Prussia to treat for victorious Germany. The interview, a great scene of history, brought out clearly one side of Moltke's character. Bismarck spoke of the cession of Alsace and Lorraine, but was generous to the defeated enemy, and seemed willing to discuss conditions of peace. Moltke did justice to the courage of the French, but was harsh, peremptory, and stiff in his manner, and his language showed that he rather desired to annihilate foes already crushed. He was not to blame for insisting that the French troops should lay down their arms and become prisoners of war, and he was within his right, when, a few hours afterwards, he rejected a proposal of the ill-fated Emperor, that they should march into Belgium, pledged not to fight again. War is not an affair of sentiment, and there were special reasons, in the existing state of France, when the Empire evidently was on the brink of ruin, and there could be little hope of a stable government, that concessions should not be lightly granted. But Moltke's bearing was unnecessarily severe, and in the hour of his triumph he ought not to have sneered at "the presumption and shallowness" of the French people, an expression which

wounded French nature to the quick. The conduct of Marlborough to Tallard, after Blenheim, and of Napoleon to the Austrian officers at Ulm, presents a striking and painful contrast,[1] and the attitude of Moltke on this great occasion reveals a dislike and scorn of France, and a want of tact and of knowledge of men, to be noticed in more than one passage of his career.

The German armies on the field of Sedan were about 180,000 or 190,000 strong, with from 600 to 700 guns; the Army of Châlons had about 350 guns, and numbered, in the morning, 120,000 men. Defeat could not have been averted, yet this frightful disaster should not have occurred. When the Germans, indeed, had encircled their prey, it was impossible to resist or escape; the French, placed in positions from the first too confined, were driven in a multitude against a worthless fortress; all avenues of retreat were effectually shut, and the German batteries had free play on the mass of routed soldiery. But had Ducrot's advice been followed, a considerable part of the Army of Châlons would, in all probability, have reached Mézières, and it would have been better to have tried to break out for Carignan, before the German armies had met at Illy, than to wait to be caught in a deadly trap, even if this movement must have led to defeat.

[1] How different was the policy of the chiefs of conquering Rome, expressed in the noble lines of Virgil:—

"Hæ tibi sint artes; pacisque imponere morem,
Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos."

Nothing can excuse such a calamity as Sedan, and the responsibility largely falls on Wimpffen, for interfering with Ducrot at a most critical time, and for insisting on adopting a most unwise course.[1] The scenes that followed the capitulation of Sedan form one of the darkest pages in the annals of France. In view of the birth-place of Turenne—we may fancy the shade of that great warrior indignant at the events of the preceding days—and on plains thickly strewn with the ravages of war, 85,000 disarmed and captive men, the remains of the lost Army of Châlons, were huddled within enclosures near the Meuse, until their conquerors should obtain the means to transport them beyond the Rhine and the Elbe. The unhappy Emperor had already gone; confusion had waited on his banners, and it was, indeed, idle to state that the heir of Napoleon went into exile, attended by a brilliant escort of the soldiery whose fathers had witnessed Jena. The bearing of the French was characteristic of the race; imprecations fell from many passionate lips, cries that "We are betrayed and abandoned" were loudly heard; and the fool

[1] For the chances of the escape of the Army of Châlons had Ducrot's orders been carried out, see Ducrot's "Sédan," pp. 27, 28. The general is too sanguine, but his view is remarkable. It may fairly be said that had he commanded in chief on the 30th of August, the army would have got to Mézières, and Sedan would not have been fought. The arguments of Wimpffen are quite untenable. We shall notice the observations of Villars and Napoleon on disasters of this kind, when we come to the surrender of Metz.

fury of Paris blended with the sullenness of despair. Yet the attitude of thousands was manly and noble; the martial port, the undaunted countenance of the disciplined veteran were not changed, and eye-witnesses have told how, even in this hour of woe, brave hearts still beat high with hope for France. The vast material of the Army of Châlons fell a trophy of war into the hands of the victors.

Sedan forms the third act in the drama of the war; it was the prelude to the fall of the French Empire, and to the renewal of the struggle under changed conditions. The Imperial armies of France had been swept from the open field, and all that remained of them was the army of Bazaine, immured around Metz, and soon to become captive. Such disasters had never been witnessed before; they surpassed Austerlitz, Jena, and Friedland, and the idolaters of success, it is needless to say, have extolled the victories of the Germans as miracles of war, and have described Moltke as the first of strategists. Impartial history pronounces a different judgment, though she gives the meed of deserved eulogy. The operations of Moltke in this episode of the campaign were very superior to those around Metz, which have been rightly subjected to adverse comments. The formation and direction of the Army of the Meuse, the investment of Metz, as affairs stood, and above all, the admirable night march on Sedan, exhibit, almost in the highest degree, decision, promptness, and clear insight, and they were undoubtedly

the moves of a great commander. The immense superiority, too, of the German armies in essential elements of military power, over the ill-organized Army of Châlons, was illustrated in the fullest completeness; it naturally exceeded all that had been seen before, in the case of the more efficient Army of the Rhine. But when it is alleged that the advance on Sedan was even finer than the advance on Ulm, in the memorable campaign of 1805, and that the victory of Sedan shows more genius than Ulm, a fair inquirer must express an emphatic protest. It is one thing to move armies a few leagues, towards an object already almost within sight, and quite another to move armies from Hanover and Brittany to the Upper Danube, and if Sedan was a "bigger thing" than Ulm, it does not give proof, on the part of the conquerors, of equal forethought or strategic power. Moltke showed in many passages of his career great resolution and force of character, and he could deal most ably with what was at hand and before him. But he did not possess the imagination that sees into the unknown, or the supreme genius that regulates grand movements, at immense distances, and remote in time; in this, as in many other respects, he is not to be compared with Napoleon, and, spite of the telegraph and appliances of the kind, the strategy of Ulm and Marengo surpassed his achievements. It should be added that, at Sedan, as throughout the war, he had an overwhelming superiority of force, and Macmahon played into

his hands even more completely than Mack played into those of Napoleon.

As for the operations of the French, ending at Sedan, they were at least as faulty as those of Bazaine, although for very different reasons. Macmahon was a brave and intelligent soldier, his capture of the Malakoff, his march to Magenta, were dashing, brilliant and well conceived exploits, but a general of division, Napoleon has remarked, is very different from a general-in-chief, and Macmahon was unfit for supreme command. His march to the Meuse admits of no excuse; he knew that he ought to fall back on Paris; he was perfectly aware of his enemy's movements; and yet he consented to a fatal course to assist a colleague, and to prop up a government. Still more unpardonable was his resolve to advance eastwards on the 28th of August, and to give up the retreat to Mézières; this was a deliberate sacrifice, for supposed reasons of state, of the most obvious principles of war; and, we repeat, this conduct was well-nigh criminal. Nothing, too, could be more unwise and feeble than the inactivity of the 31st of August, the indecision in not moving on Mézières, the neglect to break down the bridges on the Meuse; and Macmahon's idea, to which he clung to the last, that he might be able to reach Carignan and Metz, proves that he had no knowledge of the higher parts of war. Vacillation, hesitation, and want of purpose, were the faults of the Marshal during these woful days, and he showed himself to be without the strength of character

which Napoleon has called the best quality of a chief. He was, no doubt, an honourable and high-minded man, and it is to his credit that, in an inquiry on Sedan, he took the whole responsibility on himself, and blamed neither the Government nor his lieutenants. But he was utterly in error in hinting, as he did, that his fall may have changed the fortunes of the day; he would have rejected the advice of Ducrot; Wimpffen obstinately carried his ideas out, and a tremendous catastrophe was the result. It is unnecessary to dwell on the bad condition of the Army of Châlons compared to its enemy; this circumstance alone should have induced Macmahon to avoid the calamitous march eastwards, and that he did not retreat on Paris was one principal cause that France succumbed, and was compelled to bow to the will of the conqueror.

CHAPTER VII.

Advance of the Army of the Meuse and of the chief part of the Third Army through France—The Germans in front of Paris—Confidence of Moltke—His miscalculation in supposing that France would yield in a short time—Revolution of 4th September—The Government of National Defence—Paris resolves to stand a siege—Resources of the capital in material and in military force—Investment of Paris by the German armies—Trochu and Ducrot—The zone of investment—The zone of defence—Sorties made by the Parisian levies—Gambetta—The rising of France against the invaders—Organization of the defence—Extraordinary ability and energy of Gambetta—Formation of provincial armies—Erroneous views of Moltke as to the reality of the defence of France—Fall of Laon, Toul, Strasbourg, Soissons, and other places—First defeats of the French provincial armies—The resistance continues—Conduct of Bazaine after the investment of Metz—The 26th of August at Metz—The battle of Noisseville—Criminal negligence and intrigues of Bazaine—The fall of Metz—Reflections on these events.

SEDAN had engulphed, as if in an earthquake, the last army of France in the field, and the Army of the Rhine was immured at Metz, a circle of iron thrown around it. All that seemed required to bring the war to a close was to march on Paris at once, to witness its fall, and to dictate the terms of a triumphant peace. Moltke had accomplished more than he had deemed possible, and in the serene confidence of speedy success, he directed an im-

mediate advance on the capital, carrying out the design he had formed from the first. Two corps[1] were left to watch the captives of Sedan, with orders to follow in the wake of the conquerors, and within three days after the great surrender, the Army of the Meuse and the Third Army, now composed of six and a half corps,[2] had uncoiled themselves from around the fortress which had been the scene of the 1st of September, and were on their way for the plains of Champagne, through the difficult region of the Argonne. The invaders moved on an immense front, the Army of Meuse spreading over the valley of the Aisne, pushing detachments northwards, as far as Laon, and descending into the valleys of the Ourcq and the Oise; the Third Army filling the valley of the Marne, and extending to the distant valley of the Aube. Historic towns and strongholds were passed on the march, and scenes illustrated by the genius of Turenne, and by the immortal exploits of 1814; but France seemed unable to lift up her head, and the German masses rolled steadily onwards, encountering no resistance on their path. By the 16th and 17th September, the two armies, drawing towards each other, had entered the region of forest and hill, of winding river and of fertile plain, of which Paris, girdled

[1] The 11th Prussian and 1st Bavarian corps.

[2] The Army of the Meuse was still composed of the Guards and the 4th and 12th corps; the Third Army was composed at this time of the 5th and 6th Prussian corps, of the 2nd Bavarian, and of the Würtembergers.

by her dependent villages and suburbs, forms the imposing centre, and thousands of peasants, flocking in with their household stuff, had given the capital almost the only sign of the approach of the all-mastering enemy. One incident only had ruffled the calm of a movement that seemed a huge triumphal progress. The 13th corps of Vinoy, which, we have seen, had been sent to Mézières to support Macmahon, had rapidly fallen back, at the close of the battle, and the 6th Prussian corps, even now in its rear, had made an attempt to cut off its retreat. Vinoy, however, skilfully making forced marches, had succeeded in effecting his escape by Laon; and his troops, increased by numerous fugitives from Sedan, reached Paris in safety before the invaders.

Probability is the rule of life, and you must act quickly on probabilities in war. Moltke is not to be blamed, if tried by this test, for advancing on Paris, with a full conviction that the city would fall and France succumb in a few days, or, at most, a few weeks. The armies of the Empire had been swept from the scene; the Empire itself had become a phantom, and could a nation under the heel of a conqueror resist the omnipotent hosts of Germany? Not a soldier beyond the Rhine, and very few in France, believed that Paris, although fortified, could hold out against a victorious enemy; and France had yielded, in 1814 and 1815, when the example had been set by the capital. A Prussian commander, too, might reasonably suppose that, after disasters

surpassing Jena, the French would imitate the Prussian people, especially as Austria and Italy had abandoned France, and her misfortunes had left her without a friend in Europe. All the chances, therefore, seemed on the side of Moltke, and if we accept the criterion of success, his strategy was altogether justified, for Paris and France were subdued at last.

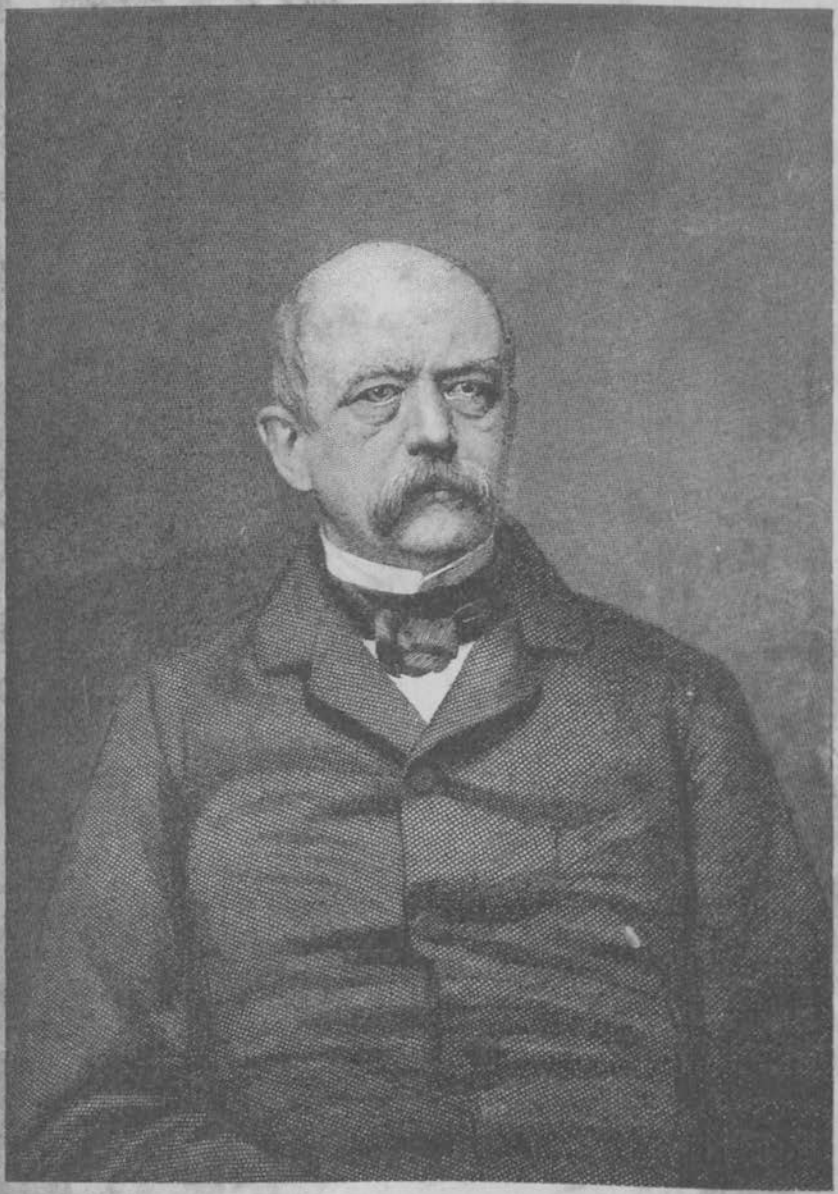
The march on Paris was, nevertheless, a mistake, founded on calculations that proved false, and that very nearly changed the fortunes of the war. Like most soldiers, Moltke had little faith in moral power in conflict with material force; he had a rooted dislike and contempt for Frenchmen, and he did not believe that France would make a real effort to vindicate her great name, and to oppose the invader. This, however, was a complete error, and there were other considerations that might have made the Prussian leader pause in his march of conquest. Paris had more than once resisted an enemy; it had now become a gigantic fortress; over and over again, in her splendid history, France had risen Phœnix-like from her ashes; and, "stamping her proud foot had called legions out of the earth," which had discomfited even the Leagues of Europe. Metz, too, had not fallen as yet; the German armies, in the march to Paris, were only[1] 150,000 strong, and could not be largely increased for a time; a net-work of strongholds stood in their rear, and not even one of the great railway lines to

[1] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. pp. 1, 32.

the capital had been completely mastered. Was it wise, therefore, under these conditions, to plunge into the interior of France, a country, which, prostrate as it was, was rich in elements of power for war, and with communications, so to speak, strangled, to attack an immense and fortified city, which could not be assaulted, or regularly besieged, for a period of many months at least? Moltke, however, took the hazardous course; and, as the result, Paris resisted stubbornly. France rose, almost to a man, to arms; the invaders were placed in grave peril, the resources of Germany were cruelly strained, to an extent that, perhaps, will be never known; she triumphed after a protracted contest, owing to accidents mainly, on which she could not reckon; and if France was at last vanquished, she assuredly taught her foes a lesson, not to advance hastily to the Loire and the Seine, and she inscribed another grand page on the national annals. It is not difficult, after the event, to see that Moltke might have obtained all that Germany obtained at last, without running enormous risks, and setting fortune on the hazard of the die. But if he was in error, he made the mistake made by Napoleon, when he advanced on Moscow, and omniscience is not given to the children of men.

During the march of the German armies through France, a revolution had broken out in Paris. The Government of the Regency had done much to increase the national resources for war, and especially to strengthen the menaced capital; but

the Empire had been long undermined; Palikao, the Imperial War Minister, had insisted on the fatal advance to the Meuse, and at the intelligence of the disaster of Sedan, Paris rose up in fury against the men in office. Scenes, too like those of 1792, were witnessed; mobs broke into the Assembly of the State, clamouring for the "deposition of the Man of Sedan;" the Empress, to her honour, retired into Belgium, in order to avert a civil war; and at a tumultuous meeting at the City Town Hall, the leaders of the party which, since 1851, had always been sworn foes of the Empire, declared that Napoleon III. had forfeited his crown, and set up a Republic in his stead. A Provisional Government was quickly formed; it had seized the reins of power by the 4th of September, and it proclaimed itself a "Government of National Defence," pledged to resist the invader to the last. The nominal head of the new power was Trochu, a general of some parts and distinction, for years neglected under the Empire; but its master spirit was Léon Gambetta, a lawyer little known, but a man of genius, of a rash and domineering nature, indeed, yet endowed with the supreme gift of command; and if the Government had no lawful origin, it represented the convictions of Paris, and, as was soon to appear, of the nation, both resolved to defend the soil of France. The ministry entered on its functions at once, and while the veteran statesman, Thiers, went on a mission to the Courts of the Great Powers, to plead for France and to invoke their



BISMARCK.

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sympathy, it addressed itself to the gigantic task of preparing to withstand the German invasion. Negotiation, indeed, was tried for a moment; but as Bismarck insisted on harsh conditions, which Favre, the new Foreign Minister, would not accept, it failed, and war was the only alternative. Spite of the cynical scoffs of politicians and soldiers, who believed further resistance hopeless, Paris girded up her loins for the contest, declaring that France would yield "neither her lands nor her fortresses;" and the whole nation proved by heroic deeds, that the noble cry of patriotism was no vainglorious boast.

The enemy, however, was at the gates of Paris, and how was it to resist his efforts? As early as July the Imperial Government had taken precautions for the defence of the city, and, after Wörth and Spicheren, the Regency, we have said, had accomplished much to secure this object. Immense stores of provisions were laid in; heavy guns were brought from the great naval arsenals; large bodies of marines and sailors and of Gardes Mobiles were gathered together within the capital; munitions of war of all kinds were collected, and attempts were made to strengthen the fortifications of the place, by constructing earthworks, redoubts, and entrenchments. The new Government owed much to these labours, but the Revolution, which had just taken place, undoubtedly quickened into intense activity the exertions of the world of Paris, patriotic and warlike in all ages, though on the surface given to ease and pleasure. Local committees were formed

by the citizens themselves, connected with a great Central Committee of Defence, composed of Trochu, and other men in power, and the work of obtaining supplies, of forming and drilling troops, of clearing ramparts, of repairing forts, of making improvised armed lines, and, in short, of turning the city into a real fortress, capable of enduring a protracted siege, went on with marvellously rapid and fruitful results.

By the second week of September Paris was in a state of preparation to resist the Germans, far more complete than was generally supposed. For the time, indeed, it was really safe, for Moltke had never thought of trying to assault a city which could be made a mass of barricades, not to refer to its walls and forts, and the invaders did not possess any artillery for a siege. In fact, the capital was already prodigiously strong, and the only present defect in its armour was the absence of an effective military force. Vinoy's corps, indeed, had fortunately returned, and a new corps, the 14th, had been formed and placed under the command of Ducrot, the ablest of the French chiefs at Sedan; but these arrays, though fully 70,000 strong, were composed for the most part of rude levies, of troops from depôts, of men of the untried reserves, and contained only two trained regiments. There were also about 115,000 Gardes Mobiles, youths without discipline or experience in war, and to these should be added a huge assemblage of about 300,000 [1]

[1] The "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. p. 30, is incorrect

National Guards, traders, artisans, and partly the scum of the populace, as a whole little fit for the work of soldiers. The administrative services, too, required for armies, were deficient, or in a most embryonic state, and, in short, of the half million of men who were to defend Paris, not 20,000 were real troops. Intelligence, energy and devoted courage can, nevertheless, do much behind armed walls, and the city was to give a noble example of this truth to the world.

Moltke had never hesitated as to the true method of operating against and reducing Paris, an event which he believed not distant. His orders were given on the 16th and 17th of September, and on the following day the Army of the Meuse began to close round the city to the east and the north. The advancing masses met no resistance, and by the 19th they had traced a great investing line, extending from Neuilly on the Marne to the Seine beyond Paris. Two fronts of the capital were thus hemmed in, and meanwhile the Third Army had addressed itself to the task of surrounding the southern and western fronts. The Seine was crossed between Villeneuve Saint Georges and Corbeil, and the invaders advanced along the heights overlooking the capital from Clamart and Châtillon, towards Sévres, Marly, and Versailles, in

in estimating the entire number of the men employed at first in defending Paris at 300,000 only. General Ducrot, in his elaborate work, "La Defense de Paris," livre ii. chap. i., computes them at nearly half a million.

order to complete the investing circle. They were not, however, unmolested on the march, and on the 19th the first engagement took place between the conquerors and the Republican levies. Trochu, a cautious and able, but not a daring man, had wished to confine Paris to a passive defence, but Ducrot, a chief of a higher order, had persuaded him to allow the 14th corps to fall boldly on the flank of the Germans, as they wound round this side of the city, especially as Clamart and Châtillon were points of vantage, if possible not to be won by the enemy. A brisk and well contested encounter followed, but a panic seized a part of the untrained French troops, and Ducrot was ultimately forced to retreat. The views of Trochu seemed thus justified; the French refrained from offensive movements, and indeed, for a time, showed few signs of life, and the Germans had soon made their way to Versailles.

Having gained the positions they sought around Paris, the invaders proceeded to strengthen their lines of investment, and by these means to besiege the city.[1] The capital of France has been made by

[1] For the second phase of the war, beginning with the Siege of Paris, the "Prussian Staff History" should, of course, be consulted. But this part of the work is not so valuable as the first part; it abounds in suppressions and occasionally in misrepresentation; it is far from candid, and it is pervaded by a spirit of contempt for the efforts of France. Moltke's Précis exaggerates these faults; and the same may be said of all the works on the German side which have come under my notice. The French authorities are numerous and good, and deserve careful attention. General Ducrot's book, and an admirable volume by M. Viollet Le Duc, should be studied, with General Vinoy's résumé, for the Siege of

PARIS
VERSAILLES
LA VILLETTE
BOBIGNY
BONDY
MEAUX

nature an extremely formidable centre of defence, offering many obstacles even to the most powerful enemy. To the east the converging streams of the Marne and the Seine, running into each other at Charenton, present a great double fosse to a hostile army, compelling it to divide and to secure its rear, and the united rivers, now known as the Seine only, after passing through Paris, form a series of bends extending for miles, as far as Poissy, and protecting in three great folds the city to the west. To the north-east rises a great tableland, stretching from near Vincennes to Montreuil and Romainville, and opposing a barrier to attack; and the wide plain of St. Denis to the north is commanded by a succession of heights, La Villette, Belleville, and Montmartre, points of vantage against an advancing enemy. To the south a long range of uplands and hills, spreading from St. Cloud to the Seine eastwards, by Versailles, Meudon, Sceaux and Villejuif, and offering to the sight from the heights of Châtillon magnificent scenes of grandeur and beauty, covered Paris for ages from that side, and though this was[1] always the vulnerable front, and

Paris. The war in the provinces has been well described by M. de Freycinet, by Generals D'Aurelle and Faidherbe, and especially by the illustrious Chanzy, as regards the operations in which they took part. The elaborate and careful analysis of General Derrécagaix should also be perused. Rüstow's History, though written from a German point of view, is tolerably impartial.

[1] Edward III. advanced against Paris from the heights of Châtillon in 1360; so did Henry IV. to begin the celebrated siege which ended the War of the League. Blücher, too, threatened the capital in 1815 from the south.

modern artillery, from many points of these eminences, can ravage the city, still they are not in any sense to be easily mastered if there is a trained military force to support the defence. In the midst of this immense circle of engirdling rivers, of heights rising into natural bastions, of highlands difficult to ascend and subdue, Paris, shielded from hostile approach, lies cradled; a huge world of buildings stretching out for leagues, decked with edifices of historic renown, running out into petty towns and hamlets, and animated in all its parts by intense life and passion.

In the ages of Barbarism, and the Middle Ages, Paris, like all cities, was rudely fortified, and, as Napoleon has remarked, it often owed its safety to its walls. Louis XIV., in the plenitude of his power, removed the ancient ramparts to enlarge his chief town, but Vauban—a fact not generally known—proposed a scheme of new defences not unlike that adopted ultimately in the present century. Napoleon always wished to fortify Paris, but incessant war interfered with his purpose, and it was not until[1] the Hundred Days that he threw up a few entrenchments around the city, a precaution rendered fruitless by the defeat of Waterloo. The design was renewed under Louis Philippe, and between 1840 and 1845 a regular system of fortifications was planned and completed. The city was surrounded by a wall and ramparts, made difficult to assail by a

[1] Napoleon's observations on the fortification of Paris will be found in his "Commentaries," vol. v. pp. 104-9. Ed. 1867.

broad ditch, and ninety-four bastions were added to protect this inner circle of defence with their fire. But Paris was not to be exposed to the horrors of an assault, and fifteen forts were constructed beyond the enceinte, to increase the strength of existing obstacles, to guard and cover vulnerable points, and to keep away the approach of a hostile army. One fort was at the confluence of the Marne and the Seine; three, combined with the old château of Vincennes, extended to the east and the north-east, commanding from the tableland along this front the valley of the Marne, and the adjoining lowlands; and five more closed the plain of St. Denis, and shielded the historic town of that name. To the west there was only one fort, for an attack on that side was not probable, and the triple coil of the Seine formed a powerful defence, but this was in itself a fortress, and the great work of Valerien could sweep with its fire the peninsula next to the Bois de Boulogne. Not less than five forts covered the southern front, but these were commanded by the heights above, and[1] this vice in their position had been pointed out long before artillery possessed its present range and power. The south of Paris, therefore, remained its weakest point, and yet art added immensely to the strength of a spot strongly defended by nature. The engineers who fortified the French capital believed that a period of sixty days would be the extreme limit of its power of resistance; it held out considerably more than

[1] Clarke, "Fortification," p. 59.

double that time under conditions of the worst possible kind.

In the presence of the colossal fortress around which they had already gathered, the first care of the Germans was to secure the circle they had formed from attack. For this purpose, the methods were followed already adopted before Metz; roads were broken up, batteries carefully laid, entrenchments thrown up, and stockades made; and inundations were formed on several lowlands to prohibit access to an assailant. The villages, the buildings, the forests, the woodlands, which spread along every side of the city, gave facilities to the besiegers' work; these were strongly fortified, or made impassable, and the fairest scenes that adorned the adjoining tract were turned into barriers to resist the enemy. In a very short time, a huge line of investment, on a circumference of more than fifty miles, was drawn nearly around the whole capital, and the German masses were placed behind this immense zone, to hold Paris in their grasp, and to defy their foes. The invading armies had gradually closed in, and the Army of the Meuse now held positions, though still beyond the range of the forts, from the Marne to beyond Argenteuil northwards, in the second peninsula formed by the Seine to the west. A narrow gap was left in the investing line on this front; for the besieged, it was believed, would not be able to cross the bends of the Seine on that side, before the besiegers could force them back; but along the whole southern and south-eastern fronts, the Third Army, ere long

reinforced by the two corps left behind at Sedan, extended from St. Germains to the far-distant points where it joined hands with the Army of the Meuse, holding Marly, Versailles, Châtillon, Sceaux, Bonneuil, Bry, and all the other adjoining villages, and thus completing the besiegers' circle. Outside this zone, detachments of troops were sent to secure the passages of the rivers around, and to put down any hostile gatherings; and an external zone, for the present imperfect, was thrown beyond the zone that engirdled the city. Paris was thus isolated and cut off from the world; and Moltke, at the head of the German armies, and entrenched behind his impenetrable lines, calmly awaited the hour of its approaching fall. The revolutionary follies, he thought, of the citizens, would accelerate a consummation which, in any event, famine would render certain in no long space of time.

Paris had not been inactive during these days, when a kind of Chinese wall was being built around it. But a master-mind was wanting to the defence; and this deficiency continued to the last moment, even if it did not affect the final result. There were no discords between the chiefs in command, but there was a strongly marked divergence of views, and conflicting projects distracted energies which ought to have been concentrated on a single purpose. Ducrot, the more original and able man,[1] believed that the only chance for the capital was to

[1] Ducrot, "La Défense de Paris," vol. i. pp. 316–319. This plan is noticed in the "Prussian Staff History," but without comment, a tolerable proof that it was a good one.

break the investing circle by its own efforts. He was convinced that France did not possess the means of creating a real army of relief; and, differing from Trochu in this respect, he had formed a plan of operations on these assumptions. Having carefully surveyed the German lines, he thought they presented one weak point at the gap left, we have seen, to the west; and he proposed to make preparations to force a passage by the second peninsula formed by the bends of the Seine. A large army was to be collected in the first peninsula, and, under the protection of the fire of the great work of Valerien, and of other works thrown up for the purpose, it was to cross the river at Carrières and Bezons, to establish itself in the second peninsula, overpowering any enemies in its path; and escaping by Argenteuil to the north—a false attack was to keep the Germans in check here—it was to make its way into the valley of the Oise. Having thus cut through the investing zone, it was to occupy Rouen, and make the sea its base; and having strengthened itself, and secured supplies, it was to summon to its aid the provincial levies, to march again on Paris, and to attack the enemy in the rear, the movement being seconded by great sorties from the capital.

This operation offered some hopes of success, and Trochu allowed Ducrot to have his way, and to take the first steps to give effect to his enterprise. But Trochu did not approve of the project at heart, he did not give it earnest support; and as no deter-

mined attempt was made to complete it, the only result was to weaken and hamper the defence.[1] The ideas of Trochu, in fact, were altogether different from those of his more daring colleague; and as he was invested with supreme command, he naturally insisted on carrying them out. He believed the Germans intended to assault Paris; and his first care, therefore, was to seek to make the capital impregnable to this mode of attack. When this had been effected he thought that the lines of the invaders might be, perhaps, weakened by pushing out counter approaches to them; and he was willing to try the effects of sorties, in order at once to harass the enemy, and to inure the armed masses in Paris to war. But he thought that the capital could never save itself, and that an army of relief would be required to cause the raising of the siege; and he looked to France to supply this force from outside. He regarded Paris, in a word, as a fortress, to be defended and assisted in the ordinary way; and his ideal was the defence of Sebastopol, a siege at which he had gained distinction.

Acting on these notions Trochu proceeded to secure the city, in the first instance, from assault; and if divided counsels were not without mischief, he was admirably seconded by the armed bodies in Paris, and especially by the citizens as a whole. The forts, largely garrisoned by the marines and

[1] For the evil results of the want of complete unity in direction and of divergent views on the defence of Paris, the reader may consult the admirable work of M. Viollet le Duc in every chapter.

sailors, were manned in force, and received the best gunners to be found; the enceinte was occupied by the National Guard, and was strengthened and improved in different ways, and the spaces between the forts were, at different points, filled by redoubts and entrenchments armed with powerful batteries. A zone of defence, which defied the enemy, was thus opposed to the zone of investment, both connected throughout, as at Metz, by the telegraph; and this barrier in the besiegers' way became even more impenetrable than their hastily constructed lines. This gain, however, was only trifling; Moltke, we have seen, had never contemplated an assault, and obviously if Paris could not do more than this, its surrender was only a question of time. Trochu's operations failed at this point, and it cannot be said that at any part of the siege he displayed the qualities of a great captain, even if Paris could not have averted its fall. Nevertheless, the city made immense exertions on the principles of defence laid down by its rulers. A system of counter approaches was begun, and a series of vigorous sorties was made against the enemy's lines in many directions. These attacks, protected by the fire of the forts, were ultimately repelled in every instance, but two were, for a time, successful; they were most honourable to the Parisian levies, and, in fact, they were much more effective than the wretched demonstrations made about this time by the army of Bazaine enclosed in Metz. Meanwhile, Trochu and his lieutenants continued the work of

organizing and forming into soldiers the armed multitudes within the capital, and, all things considered, the results were wonderful. Two bodies, deserving in some measure the name of armies, were by degrees arrayed, and even the National Guards did good service. Yet one great and important mistake was made; after the bad fashion of a revolutionary time, the Gardes Mobiles and the National Guards were allowed to elect their own officers, and this not only greatly injured the defence, but proved a cause of frightful disasters afterwards.

The close of October was now at hand, and, though besieged for nearly six weeks, Paris remained defiant, and showed no signs of yielding. The defences of the city could resist any attack; the levies within the walls were acquiring, by degrees, something like military discipline and worth, and had given proof of this in more than one encounter. The positive results were not, perhaps, very great, and yet they had begun to attract the attention of thousands of observers in many lands. The attitude of the great mass of the citizens was the most distinctive feature of this period. Men of all ages had taken up arms; the elders held watch on the ramparts and walls; the youths filled the ranks of the quickly increasing armies. Every calling, profession, and trade ministered to the great duty of maintaining the defence; and the energy and intelligence that were displayed in supplying the innumerable requirements for the levies and troops, were, in the highest degree, admirable. The activity of 1793

was witnessed again, but without the crimes of the Reign of Terror, and Paris exhibited a truly heroic aspect. Sounds of revolutionary passion were heard, of discontent, of fretful impatience; but these had no real or lasting effect, and the world of the capital rallied round the Government, despising privations already severe, and resolved to fight and to endure to the last. An ebullition of anarchy, caused by the failure of Thiers to obtain assistance for France,[1] was put down without the least difficulty; Jacobinism had no hold on the heart of the city.

While Paris, in spite of divided counsels and of military resources imperfect in the extreme, was thus holding the invaders at bay, a great change had almost transformed France. Three members of the Government of National Defence had gone to Tours to arouse the provinces, and to call on the nation to take part in the war; but their mission had been almost wholly fruitless. It was otherwise when a man of real power appeared on the scene, and made his presence felt. Gambetta, escaping from Paris in a balloon, had joined his colleagues in the first days of October; he addressed himself to the herculean task of organizing France against the conquerors, and the results he achieved astounded Europe. The mass of Frenchmen, accustomed for years to repose, and subjected to a despotic cen-

[1] The account of this petty outbreak by the Prussian Staff is thoroughly unfair. "History," part ii. vol. i. pp. 261, 262. "General Ducrot," vol. ii. pp. 39, 70, is accurate and impartial.

tralized government, had scarcely lifted up a hand to attack the enemy; they showed the apathy of 1814-15; they had looked listlessly on while the German armies were overrunning the natal soil. And if the nation appeared to be wanting to itself, the means of prolonging the war seemed equally absent. A few thousand men of the Algerian army, some thousands of troops, still in their depôts, and a mass of young recruits and of Gardes Mobiles, were the only materials of military power at hand which remained to France in the hour of her agony. To compose armies that could take the field out of these feeble elements might have been deemed impossible;[1] there was an immense deficiency of trained officers, of artillery, of small-arms, of horses, of trains, of all the equipment essential to organized force; and the many departments of which the service is required to maintain troops on foot, to make them efficient, and to support war, being confined by the Empire to two or three large centres, were not to be found generally in the provinces of France. The new levies, too, would, even in mere numbers, be very inferior to the German hosts, if they could not be enormously increased.

Gambetta, however, did not hesitate; he possessed the creative genius of Italy, an indomitable

[1] For these details, and for the results of Gambetta's efforts, the reader should consult M. de Freycinet's "La Guerre en Province." This able man was Gambetta's best support, and has played a conspicuous part in reorganizing the military power of France. Rüstow's History may also be studied, vol. ii. chaps. 30-4.

will, and a strong nature; and extraordinary success attended his efforts. His first care was to summon into the field all the existing military forces of France, and to form corps d'armée, or lesser divisions out of the bodies of men bound by law to serve. At the same time the wealth and the credit of France were employed in obtaining the material of war from all parts of the civilized world; and as the Germans had no fleets at sea, stores of munitions of war and supplies of all kinds, hundreds of cannon, and rifles in tens of thousands, were poured rapidly into the French ports. Gambetta turned his attention next to organizing and preparing the levies thus raised; he found old soldiers to fill the place of officers; he sought commanders in men in retreat, or passed over by the Imperial Government, and especially in officers drawn from the fleets; and the civil service yielded hundreds of recruits to assist the military service in its different branches. By these means, in an incredibly short time, the elements of armies were put together, and in less than a month more than 90,000 men were in the field, ready to fight for France, and not devoid of real military power. These forces, however, were quite inadequate; and Gambetta made a passionate appeal to the patriotism and energy of the French people. The nation, which in every phase of its history, has always required a great leader to bring out its noblest and best qualities, shook off its lethargy like an evil dream. Frenchmen flocked in multitudes from

Brittany to Provence, to draw their swords in the defence of their country; the impulse effaced divisions of class; peer and peasant stood up in arms together, and enormous levies *en masse* were formed in the provinces, in eager response to the demands of the Government. The movement was spontaneous, universal, amazing; it surpassed even the rising of 1793, and it proved that France had not fallen from her high estate.

In this way, a prodigious addition was made to the troops already combined and prepared. The new levies were placed in camps of instruction to be made fitted for the work of war; and France was divided into a set of districts to furnish what was required for her young soldiers. Meanwhile supplies from the outer world continued to flow in; England, the United States, and many other lands became, in fact, arsenals for the needs of France; and Gambetta actually raised and equipped an armed force of 600,000 men, and put into the field 1400 guns within three months from his first appearance at Tours. Extraordinary means were adopted to make the levies capable of playing a real part in the war. Men of promise were advanced and made officers; the customary rules of promotion were annulled in favour of merit wherever found, and soldiers from foreign lands were invited to join in a crusade for the defence of France. Nor were irregular forces wanting to supplement the improvised armies; bands of free-shooters were raised and armed in every district fit for a guerilla warfare;

and thousands of these marksmen swarmed in the passes of the Vosges, or in the woods and forests around Paris.

Even the best of these levies, it is unnecessary to say, were not to be compared to the German armies. They contained comparatively few soldiers; their officers were not in sufficient numbers, and, in many instances, were bad and unskilful; they wanted cohesion, experience, and self-reliance; and much of their material was of an inferior kind. But they exhibited the peculiar fitness of Frenchmen for war; they had thousands of gallant men in their ranks, and the elements of the armed strength of France were being combined and made effective beyond what had been deemed possible. Towards the close of October there were three bodies in the field that had some pretensions to the name of armies. The first, the 15th corps, called the Army of the Loire, had been formed in the region around Orleans; the second, known as the Army of the East, was gathering in Burgundy, and Franche Comté; and the third, the Army of the North, was collected in Normandy. These arrays, however, were but the first line of the immense masses being assembled from all parts of the territory of France, and being made ready to appear in the field.

The resolution and firmness shown by Paris, and the universal rising of France were treated at first by Moltke with scornful contempt. He was convinced, we have seen, that the city would soon yield; and France, he believed, had no real means

of resistance. Disliking, as he did, the French character, he laughed at the phrases of Parisian rhetoric, and he failed to perceive the depth and the strength of the national movement against the invaders. In his eyes the Provisional Government was an illegal junta without right or power; the defence of Paris was wicked foolishness, causing havoc and waste to no purpose; the provincial armies and the levy *en masse* were partly mythical and partly worthless. There was no real patriotism or sense of duty in France; and the immense masses summoned to take up arms were droves of unwilling peasants and artisans, compelled by tyranny and imposture to shed their blood to no purpose. He judged France in a word, as the Yorks and Coburgs had judged France eighty years before, as Napoleon had judged the insurrection of Spain; the efforts of folly and Jacobin boasting would be easily put down by organized force; and a prolonged struggle was not possible. Nor had success ceased to attend the arms of Germany, though France was making a useless parade of war.[1] The sorties of the

[1] The sentiments of Moltke as to the absurdity and hopelessness of the resistance of Paris and of France, and as to the real character of the national defence, will be found in letters to his brother Adolf, vol. ii. pp. 49-76, English translation. We can only quote a few passages: "La France, 'qui est plus forte que jamais,' even under these circumstances, talks big as usual. Any army in the field has ceased to exist, but they still have M. Rochefort, 'professeur de barricades' and 'la poitrine des patriotes invincibles.' . . . I cherish a private hope that I may be shooting hares at Creisau by the end of October. . . . France has no longer an army, and yet we must wait till the Parisians, who are

Parisians had failed; they had made no impression on the German lines. The forts daily broke out in a cannonade; but their volleys were almost a waste of powder. The situation outside the capital had even improved; Laon, Toul and Soissons had opened their gates; the railways of the provinces were being mastered; and the communications of the invaders to the Rhine were being enlarged and opened. The great prize, too, of Strasbourg had been seized; the Landwehr were joyfully flocking to the war, and the numbers of the armies in the field were kept up, nay increased. A 14th corps had been formed to besiege Belfort, and to overrun the eastern provinces; and one incident was of the happiest omen. The young Army of the Loire had advanced to Artenay, as if to threaten the besiegers' lines around Paris, and it had been driven in rout beyond the river.

The position of the Germans, nevertheless, was, even now, not without peril. The calculations of Moltke had proved to be mistaken; and he was committed to an enterprise on which he had not reckoned. Paris was more powerful, and had

rising in delirium, give up this hopeless resistance. . . . It is frightful to see the havoc wrought by the mob in power, and laughable too. . . . . The terrorists drag every man, up to the age of forty-six, from house and farm, from home and family, to follow the flag. . . . Only the Advocates' reign of terror can succeed in getting such armies together, badly organized, without trains for supplies, and exposed to the inclemency of the weather . . . The terrorism of the Provisional Government has continued to work on all the good and bad qualities of the French nation. . ."

ampler resources than he had, at first, been led to suppose, and the city steadily defied the enemy. France had sprung to arms, to fight to the death; a great national rising was gathering on all sides, and was harassing and weakening the German armies. The Army of the Loire had been defeated; but in a few days it had renewed its strength, its numbers were before long doubled. The Army of the North had become menacing; the Army of the East was so formidable that the enemy could hardly make head against it. The huge tumultuary levies were as yet feeble, but they were gradually acquiring discipline and power; and the irregular bands that were seen flitting hither and thither, had become so annoying, and had done such havoc by cutting off small hostile bodies of men, and by injuring communications, and breaking up railways, that stern measures had been taken against them, and villages had been burned by way of reprisals. Thick clouds of war were slowly rolling up, and lowering upon the still exulting conquerors; and the contest which had been one of armies, was becoming that of a race against its invaders. The German armies, too, were comparatively weak in most parts of the country overrun by them; the sieges of Metz and Paris absorbed their forces; and as long as these places continued to hold out, they were spread around, and confined to, two immense circles, and were most dangerously exposed to attack. The invaders, so to speak, were girt round by fires, which might kindle into a vast conflagration.

At this conjuncture, another immense disaster seemed to announce to France that she was to cease to hope. We turn to the operations of Bazaine at Metz, and to the results that flowed from his conduct. As we have seen,[1] he had informed Macmahon, if the language, it is fair to say, was ambiguous, that he hoped to be able to join hands with him, by a movement from the north, by Montmédy, and this had, in part, caused the march that had ended at Sedan. His despatches, however, it is only just to add, became day after day less hopeful;[2] he spent the week after the great fight of Gravelotte, as we have said, in restoring his army, and in strengthening the fortifications of Metz; and it is impossible to doubt that he was still clinging to the fortress, as he had clung from the first. It has been confidently alleged that, on the 23rd of August,[3] a message came to him from Macmahon, informing him of the advance to the Meuse; but the fact, if sustained by some evidence,

[1] Ante, p. 191.

[2] Rivière Report, pp. 57, 66. This report, and the proceedings, in "le Procès Bazaine," should be studied with attention, as regards the conduct of Bazaine after Gravelotte. Many of the charges, however, we repeat, are far-fetched and strained, and exhibit the bad animus, and the too great ingenuity common in prosecutions in France. The Marshal's apology, "Guerre de 1870," should be read; but it is a feeble book. An exhaustive review of the facts will be found in the *Times* of 6th, 9th and 12th December, 1873.

[3] Rivière, pp. 80, 87. There is much to be said for this view; but an accused man should always have the benefit of a doubt, and it is better to accept the German view, "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 490, that the message from Macmahon is not shown to have reached Bazaine.

has been distinctly denied by Bazaine; and though he still lingered inactive at Metz, he probably had no thought of betraying a colleague. On the 26th, however, he gave orders for a great demonstration against the enemy; if we are to accept his statement,[1] his purpose was to break out from Metz, and to endeavour to march northwards; but if this was so, all that can be said is that his operations were as ill-conceived as possible.[2]

He made no attempt to surprise the Germans; he did not throw bridges over the Moselle; the delays of the 14th and 15th were repeated; and, in a word, the Marshal made no use of his central position, and interior lines, against the besiegers spread over a wide circumference, and weak in the extreme, on the eastern bank of the river. A singular incident now occurred. Bazaine convened a council of war, and asked his lieutenants their advice, and these unanimously recommended that the Army of the Rhine should not make an attempt to escape, but should remain in its positions round Metz. This conclusion, however, was founded on the assumption that there was not a sufficient supply of munitions,[3] and the commandant of Metz urged besides, that the forts were not in a state to resist an attack. The assumption, nevertheless, was untrue, and untrue to the Marshal's

[1] "Guerre de 1870," p. 163. The Marshal's own language, however, shows that he was hesitating.

[2] "Metz Campagne et negociations," pp. 129, 137.

[3] Rivère, pp. 93, 97. Bazaine, "Guerre de 1870," pp. 164, 167.

knowledge. Bazaine had received an official report,[1] that the store of munitions was abundant; and the excuse as regards the forts was almost baseless, even if it could be deemed an excuse, which, in any case, it was certainly not. Bazaine evidently caught at opinions which fell in with his own ideas; and it is a clear proof of this, that he suppressed the truth as to the fact on which the advice was founded, and did not inform the Council that there was no want of munitions. The order for an offensive movement was countermanded; and the French army remained in its camps, greatly to the indignation of officers and men, who described the 26th of August as a second "Day of Dupes."[2]

Had Bazaine been a real commander, nay, had he had the heart of a true soldier, he would, after his first despatch to Macmahon, have left nothing undone to get away from Metz, and to effect his junction with the Army of Châlons. His word was pledged; the issues at stake were immense; and success, we have said, ought to have been probable.[3] He was, however, a worthless and dull-minded man, without a clear conception of his plain duty; but though he was gravely to blame for still holding on to Metz, it is not likely that, on the 26th of August, he deliberately intended to do nothing from the first, to desert Macmahon, and to deceive his comrades, even if he was guilty of double dealing

[1] Rivière, pp. 99, 100. "Procès Bazaine," pp. 107, 112.

[2] Referring to a memorable passage in the history of France.

[3] See ante, p. 177.

in accepting counsels given upon assumptions, which he knew were without genuine warrant. The next passage in his conduct was of a piece with the last, but it exposes him to more decided censure. On the 29th he certainly received a despatch, announcing that Macmahon was on the Meuse; and he has maintained that he made a real effort, to leave Metz, and to join the Army of Châlons.[1] He, no doubt, gave orders that the Army of the Rhine should advance to the north-eastern front of the place, and endeavour to force the German lines, where the table-land of St. Barbe rises from the hamlets of Failly, Servigny, and Noisseville; and his intention, he has written, was to push on to Thionville, and from that point to draw near his colleague.

His dispositions, however, were so bad, that it is not easy to suppose this was his settled purpose; at best he was weak, remiss, and half-hearted. The movement began on the morning of the 31st; at that moment, two whole French corps were confronted by a few thousand men only, near St. Barbe, on the eastern bank of the Moselle,[2] and yet the Marshal did not direct an attack. The faults of the 26th, too, were committed again, and aggravated in a deplorable manner.[3] No effort was made to surprise the enemy; the Moselle was so inadequately

[1] "Guerre de 1870," p. 169.

[2] "Metz Campagne et negociations," p. 146.

[3] All this is very well pointed out in "Metz Campagne et negociations," pp. 147, 148.

bridged, that the movement of the corps on the western bank, across the stream, was lamentably slow; no feint was made to perplex the Germans, and nothing was done to turn the hostile positions; the artillery reserves were not brought up; the troops were crowded together, on a narrow front, in which their numbers were of little use; and, worse than all, perhaps, it was late in the afternoon before an attempt to assail St. Barbe began. Yet, notwithstanding these grievous errors, the advantage of the Marshal's central position and interior lines became clearly apparent. The French stormed Noisseville and two or three other villages; and though the German leaders made the greatest exertions to bring every available man to the spot, their troops were outnumbered,[1] nearly three to one, at the decisive point, the uplands of St. Barbe. The artillery of the besiegers gave them, indeed, an advantage, and their lines had been already constructed; but, with this immense superiority of force, the Army of the Rhine, if even honestly led, ought to have been able to overcome all obstacles, and to make its way through the investing circle.

Bazaine renewed the attack on the 1st of September, but the effort was a demonstration only; it is far from clear that it was not a pretence. By this time the Germans had retaken one of the lost villages, and as Prince Frederick Charles and his lieutenants had toiled hard, through the night, to draw a powerful force to the positions menaced the

[1] "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 531.

day before, the chances against their enemy had been increased. The Germans fell on the French boldly, taking the initiative in the true spirit of war, and, at the first sign of a repulse of his right wing, the Marshal withdrew his whole army from the field, and was soon again under the forts of Metz. Still, even on this day, the French had a large preponderance of force on their side;[1] the besiegers had not been able to array against their concentrated enemy an equal number of troops, so large was the circle they held; and Bazaine might even yet have conquered had he been a straightforward and determined soldier. The battle of Noisseville, as it has been called, was discreditable to him in the highest degree. His incapacity was made more than ever manifest, and perhaps more than incapacity may be laid to his charge. The occasion was one of supreme importance, and he should have made a strenuous, persistent, and continuous effort to get out of Metz and to join Macmahon. He assuredly did not do this; if he had thought of breaking the German lines, he soon recurred to his old purpose, and slunk back ignobly to Metz; and even if treachery was not in his heart, his conduct must be sternly condemned, as we look back at the events of these two days. The most conclusive proof, perhaps, that he was not in earnest, appears from the fact that in a struggle, in which he ought to have risked everything and fought to the last, he lost not much

[1] "Prussian Staff History," vol. ii. p. 531.

more than 3000 men;[1] and charity itself must admit that in his case, an impotent Priam wielded the spear of Hector.

A few days after these demonstrations at Metz, Bazaine was apprised of the disaster of Sedan, of the captivity and fall of Napoleon III., and of the establishment of the Government of National Defence. The duty of the Marshal was now evident; the Army of Châlons had disappeared; he had not to try to extend a hand to Macmahon, and he was obviously bound to seek to break out from Metz, and to place the Army of the Rhine in the field. How to attempt, and perhaps to accomplish this, was perceived by many able men in the camps of the French. Bazaine, as affairs stood, was not to look northwards, and to endeavour to escape in that direction, a dangerous and the most difficult course; but he had still a chance, and a reasonable chance, of being able to get out to the south-east, along the great roads towards the Nied and the Sarre. The effort, no doubt, would be more arduous than it would have been a few days before; the lines of investment had been completed, and Prince Frederick Charles had at last strengthened the small force on the eastern bank

[1] French writers are naturally, and very properly, indignant at the conduct of Bazaine, on this and other occasions. The Germans, on the other hand, palliate his faults as much as they can, for, if not wilfully, he really played into their hands. Nevertheless, the Prussian Staff ("History," vol. ii. p. 534) is severe on the Marshal for his operations on the 31st of August and the 1st of September.

of the Moselle, and had increased the risks of an attack from that side. Yet the experience of Noisseville had already proved, what indeed ought to have been plain beforehand, that it was possible to collect a great superiority of force against the Germans at almost any point. At this very time, full a fifth part of the besieging army was disabled by fever and other diseases; and it was by no means impossible that a real chief would have succeeded in breaking out from the south-east of Metz.[1] Success in this operation would have had effects as marked, and perhaps more decisive, than would have been the case had the movement been made on the 18th of August, or a few days afterwards. Not only would the communications of the enemy with the Rhine have been seized, and the besiegers round Paris have been in peril, but the Army of the Rhine would have been set free to give the consistency and power to the provincial levies of which they were in special need, and the war would have taken a different turn.

Bazaine's duty, therefore, was to make the

[1] We have already referred, ante pp. 177-8, to the opinion of General Hamley, and to the remarkable admission of the Prussian Staff, as to the probability of the French being able to escape from Metz, between the 17th of August and the 1st of September. For views, on the French side, on this all-important subject, see again "Metz Compagne et negociations," pp. 111, 112. A very few days could not have made a complete difference in the military situation at Metz; and to the last moment two generals, at least, of Bazaine's army believed it was possible to break out from the south-east.

attempt; and even if it had failed, another course, beside inactivity at Metz, was open to him. Trained officers, he must have known well, were one of the chief requirements of the new improvised armies; his army could provide an abundant supply of these, and he might have despatched parties of officers at night, from time to time, to give valuable aid to the forces being raised for the defence of France. Many of these officers would have, perhaps, been captured; but hundreds would have probably got through the German lines, and this reinforcement would have been of the highest importance. It should be added that the Army of the Rhine was still capable of most vigorous efforts; it was suffering less at the time than the German army, and it had not lost the confidence it had acquired at Gravelotte.

Bazaine, however, had no notion of undertaking operations of this kind; he believed that the end of the war was at hand; he continued to recognize the fallen Empire as the only lawful Government of France; and on the 12th of September he informed his lieutenants[1] "that he would not run the risk of the fate of Macmahon, and that he would not make a great sortie from Metz." Disastrous and palpable as had been his faults, we may ascribe them, perhaps, up to this point of time to dulness, vacillation, and incapacity for command;

[1] "Metz et negociations," p. 205. This conversation is not specially noticed in the prosecution of Bazaine, but it certainly took place.

he had clung to Metz, all through, probably for his own safety, and not from a sinister motive to gain power for himself, or to abandon and betray Mac-mahon, as has been alleged by partisan accusers. But thenceforward his conduct admits of no excuse; it became, in no doubtful sense, criminal. As his intention had been perhaps from the first, to remain with the Army of the Rhine at Metz, it was his bounden duty to do all that in him lay to store provisions for the support of the garrison, of the population, and of his own troops, and to husband them with the most scrupulous care, to enable him to hold out for as long a time as possible. This duty, however, he did not fulfil, not even after he had made it known that he would not try to break out from Metz; he did not procure the supplies of food from the neighbouring villages, which he might have obtained; he took no care to distribute these with a strict regard to the necessities of the place; and this was an unpardonable offence. Not only were crops and cattle not brought in from the surrounding farms and hamlets, as might have been done, but the soldiery were allowed to consume everything they could buy; the people of Metz were not put on rations; and thousands of tons of corn were wasted in feeding horses which had become useless, as it had been arranged that the army was not to move. Even on the wretched system of passive defence, adopted, in reality, from the first, the Marshal was guilty of the worst misconduct; and the results were in the

highest degree calamitous. Had he made the best use of the resources of Metz, from the time when he first assumed the command,[1] the place which held out for nine weeks only, might have held out for nearly five months; had he done this, even after the 1st September, it might have held out for more than three; and this culpable negligence was, perhaps, fatal to France.

This, however, was not the full measure of Bazaine's guilt; he became, virtually, if not of set purpose, a traitor. After Sedan, he issued a proclamation to his troops, insisting upon their duty to France,[2] but containing ominous allusions to late events in Paris. The German leaders probably caught at the hint; and towards the close of September,[3] a spy of the name of Regnier was conveyed through the German lines into Metz, and began to sound the Marshal on conditions of peace. Bazaine, to do him justice, called in two of his lieutenants to hear what was said by the spy, who pretended to be an envoy from the Empress; and, extraordinary as the fact may appear, Bourbaki, the chief of the Imperial Guard, left Metz to confer

[1] "Rivière," p. 260. "Procès Bazaine," p. 113 seqq. An impartial observer will probably be of opinion that Bazaine's conduct, as regards supplies at Metz, was, by many degrees, the worst feature in his case.

[2] "Guerre de 1870," p. 178.

[3] That Regnier was a spy seems established by incontrovertible evidence, "Guerre de 1870," pp. 179, 185. A trick of the same kind was played by the Prussians at the siege of Mayence in 1793. See the "Life of Kléber," by Pajol, pp. 20, 21.

with the late Regent. The Empress instantly disavowed Regnier; but these crooked intrigues did not end with his mission. On the 10th of October, when it had become evident that the fall of Metz could not be long delayed, Bazaine called another council of war; and after the customary talk on occasions of the kind, of "the honour of arms, and holding out to the last," one of the Marshal's aide-de-camps was allowed to leave Metz, and to make proposals at the German headquarters at Versailles, "for honourable terms for the Army of the Rhine." The aide-de-camp arrived with a written note from Bazaine, apparently not made known to his colleagues,[1] which plainly stated that France could resist no longer; that she was the prey of anarchy and revolution, and that the army could be made an instrument "to restore order and to protect society." Bismarck evidently perceived what this implied, and informed the aide-de-camp that all might be well,[2] if the army at Metz would declare for the Empress; and that if Bazaine would secure its support for the Regent, a treaty of peace would probably follow. The aide-de-camp immediately returned to Metz. Another council of war was called, and it was agreed that the aide-de-camp should see the Empress, and try to obtain terms for the Army of the Rhine, all questions of State being left to the Empress alone. Throughout this

[1] "Guerre de 1870," p. 210. This letter of Bazaine's condemns him, even under his own hand.

[2] "Guerre de 1870," p. 223.

whole time Bazaine had stood aloof from the *de facto* Government of National Defence; he had scarcely any communication with it, though this was possible in different ways; he did not make it aware of his dealings at Versailles; and little doubt can exist that he would have at least tried to employ his army to restore the Empire, to put down the men in power in Paris and at Tours, and to compel France to accept an ignominious peace.[1] The Empress, however, acting as she did, with a high and delicate sense of honour, in all that related to France and her fortunes, refused to have anything to do with negotiations of the kind, and gave Bazaine's messenger only a few words of sympathy.

The chief motive of Bazaine in these sorry intrigues was, possibly, the impulse of a desperate man, to save, by any means, himself and his army. He could hardly suppose that he would be master of the situation, after what had occurred at Metz; that he could induce his troops to betray France, and to force upon her a disgraceful peace. Nor is it likely that Bismarck believed that negotiations would be successful; he probably saw in them, in the main, a way to diminish the power of resistance

[1] The report of General Rivière, and the statement of the prosecutor in the "Procès Bazaine," set forth these intrigues and negotiations in detail with as adverse comments to Bazaine as possible. It is safe, as has been done in this brief narrative, to rely mainly on the unfortunate Marshal's own admissions and statements, and they are ample to convict him. The "Prussian Staff History" discreetly passes over this episode in the war, or touches it very lightly.

at Metz, and to injure the existing government of France. But be this as it may, the fault of Bazaine is manifest, and has rendered his name infamous. He doubtless had, to a certain extent, the countenance of his lieutenants at Metz; he did not positively declare that he would employ his army in order to set up the Empire again, to put down the existing régime in France, and to dictate terms to her at the bidding of Germany. But he had already wasted the resources at Metz with consequences of the worst kind; and his evil dealings directly tended to increase this waste, to distract his officers, to perplex their men, to encourage negligence; in a word, to paralyze and impair the defence. His conduct, too, proved that the leader, at least, of the only well-organized army of France was an enemy of her present rulers; and this not only added to the power of the Germans, but weakened and embarrassed Gambetta and Trochu, and made the strength of the nation for resistance less. Nor should we forget that if he had not the power he had the will to provoke civil war in France, in the face of her foes, in the heart of her provinces; and he was ready to be the author of a shameful 18th Brumaire, which would have been her ruin and not her safety. Some of the charges against him are not true, others are exaggerated and overstrained; but he was rightly condemned for his negligence at Metz, and for trafficking with the national invader in the field, and withholding the fact from the men actually in power. When we

look back at his incapacity, his guilt, and his treason, and the terrible consequences of his misdeeds, we cannot feel surprised that he has been deemed the curse of France by the generation of Frenchmen that beheld the war.

The intrigues with Versailles having come to nothing, or probably served the ends of the Germans, the fall of Metz was ere long to follow. Bazaine had more than once spoken of attempts to break out, after his declaration of a few weeks before, but all that was done was to make a few weak demonstrations against the German lines to the north, the very direction that should not have been taken. Yet more than one of these efforts were, in part, successful, so decisive was the advantage of the positions of the French, a significant proof of what might have been the result had the Army of the Rhine had a real commander. After fruitless and timid councils of war, the Marshal accepted the terms of his conquerors, not improbably circumvented in the dishonourable game of double dealing he had badly played. 173,000[1] men, including the army, the garrison of Metz, a great body of irregular levies, and the sick and wounded who had borne arms, defiled, on the 29th of October, 1870, under the eyes of the exulting Germans; the great bulwark of Lorraine had fallen, and even the unexampled disaster of Sedan was surpassed by a more ignominious surrender. The attitude of the

[1] For the real numbers of the French troops at Metz, see ante, note, p. 165.

captive soldiery was, nevertheless, becoming;[1] they, at least, knew they had done their duty; they had not been subdued in fair fight, but had been the martyrs of criminal misdeeds; and, unlike the captives of Sedan, they maintained a haughty silence. Bazaine was of a piece with himself to the last; his demeanour was one of stolid indifference; he had even neglected to destroy the eagles which had flown at Borny, Mars La Tour, and Gravelotte, and which now hang their wings in many a town in Germany; and he went on his way without a thought of the execrations of the townsmen of Metz denouncing him as a false-hearted traitor. It is characteristic of the want of insight and blundering stupidity of the man, that he had the effrontery to compare the defence of Metz to Kléber's defence of Mayence and Masséna's defence of Genoa, noble instances of skill and heroic endurance; and, at his trial in 1873, he was so devoid of perception as to appeal to Prince Frederick Charles as a witness in his behalf, as though Napoleon had not warned French officers to beware of the interested praise of an enemy.[2]

The surrender of Metz, long before the time when the place might be expected to fall, threw a pro-

[1] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. p. 201.

[2] The capitulations of Sedan and Metz are events that ought never to have occurred, and reflect disgrace on the arms of France. It may be interesting to observe what great French commanders thought of disasters similar in kind, though very different in degree. Villars wrote thus of the surrender of the French right at

digious weight into the scale against France, and had an immense influence in deciding the war. It was an accident on which Moltke could not calculate; he was justified, we believe, in investing the fortress, even with a force scarcely larger than the besieged, after his experience of the incapacity of Bazaine; but he could not anticipate that the Marshal would squander his resources, and betray his trust. The result, in a great degree, rectified his mistake in hastily advancing on Paris; but for this he had to thank Fortune, and not his own forethought. The Imperial armies of France had now

Blenheim, "Memoirs," vol. ii. p. 330, the genuine Vogüe edition: "C'est dans ses occasions où il faut repondre aux imbeciles, qui disent que pouvait on faire de mieux."

"Qu'il mourust
"Ou qu'un beau desespoir alors le secourust."

"L'infanterie espagnole à Rocroy n'aima-t-elle pas mieux périr que de demander quartier? Le soldat et l'officier ne doit-il pas préférer une mort glorieuse, cherchant à se faire jour la bayonette au bout du fusil, à l'ignominie de périr de faim et de misère dans les prisons? Je suis honteux et pénétré pour la nation d'une reddition aussi lasche." Napoleon has thus referred to the capitulation of Maxen in the Seven Years' War; he was probably thinking of the capitulation of Dupont at Baylon. "Comment.," vol. vi. p. 402:—"Mais que doit donc faire un général qui est cerné par des forces supérieures? Nous ne saurions faire d'autre réponse que celle du vieil Horace. Dans une situation extraordinaire, il faut une résolution extraordinaire; plus la résistance sera opiniâtre, plus on aura de chances d'être secouru ou depercer. Que de choses qui paraissent impossibles ont été faites par des hommes résolus n'ayant plus d'autre ressource que la mort! Plus vous ferez de résistance, plus vous tuerez de monde a l'ennemi, et moins il en aura, le jour même ou le lendemain, pour se porter contre les autre corps de l'armée. Cette question ne nous parait pas susceptible d'une autre solution sans perdre l'esprit militaire d'une nation, et l'exposer aux plus grands malheurs."

wholly disappeared, and the annihilation of the Army of the Rhine, which had kept Prince Frederick Charles round Metz, let loose prematurely, and at an opportune moment, another host of invaders to subdue France. The results of the war had been astounding, surpassing all that had been seen in history; and if not the idol he has been made by the courtiers of success, Moltke deserves high honour for what he had achieved. He had, doubtless, missed opportunities and given chances; he had not shown the dexterity and the perfect skill of Napoleon in moving masses of men, in more than one conspicuous instance; he had repeatedly failed to strike a defeated enemy, and his sudden march on Paris was to prove perilous. But he had carried out, most ably, a well conceived plan; and some of his operations had been those of a daring and admirable master of war. Nevertheless, the extraordinary success of the Germans was not due in the main to Moltke's faculties; it should be ascribed, for the most part, to other causes. The superiority of their forces was so decisive in numbers, organization, and military worth, that it was difficult for the French to contend against them; the unparalleled triumphs of Sedan and Metz are to be ascribed to Macmahon's weakness and levity, and to the vacillation and guilt of Bazaine. The paramount cause, however, of the disasters of France was the disregard of military for political objects; this led to the first defeats on the frontier; this prevented the retreat from the Sarre to Châlons; this con-

tributed to the ruinous march to the Meuse; and this, too, prompted Bazaine to neglect his duty, and to dabble in the treason which ended in the fall of Metz many weeks before this should have been possible. Once more France seemed about to succumb, and the German leaders believed that all would soon be over. Yet Paris and France were again to deceive them, and to make efforts so intense and amazing that the contest was protracted for months, and its issue seemed almost to the last uncertain, so grave was the stress placed on the invaders.

CHAPTER VIII.

Advance of the First and Second Armies into France after the fall of Metz—The besiegers' lines around Paris strengthened and reinforced—Mistake of Moltke as to the position of affairs outside Paris—The external zone—The Army of the Loire restored and largely increased—The Battle of Coulmiers—Alarm at the German headquarters at Versailles—Moltke makes preparations to raise the siege—Accidents which prevented the Army of the Loire from gaining the full results of its victory—Disastrous effect of the fall of Metz on the military situation as regards France—D'Aurelle falls back on Orleans, and places the Army of the Loire within lines—Moltke again mistaken in the distribution of the German forces—The Grand Duke of Mecklenburg sent to the West—Prince Frederick Charles near Orleans—Immense increase of the Army of the Loire—Prince Frederick Charles directs a general concentration of his own and the Grand Duke's forces—Views of Chanzy—Fatal mistakes made by Gambetta—The Battle of Beaune la Rolande—Ill-directed advance of the Army of the Loire, in the hope of relieving Paris—It is defeated and driven back on Orleans—Great sortie from Paris combined with false attacks—The Battle of Villiers—The sortie ultimately fails—Reflections on these events, and on the situation.

THE fall of Metz concurred with the outbreak in Paris in putting an end to parleys, perhaps insincere, between Bismarck and the new French Government. The forces of the invaders had been almost doubled by the extinction of the Army of the Rhine, before

that event should have been possible; and opinion in Europe again announced that France had no choice but to lay down her arms. Moltke steadily proceeded to turn to advantage the immense favour bestowed by Fortune, on which, we repeat, he could not have reckoned when he ventured to risk an advance on Paris, a fact to be kept in mind when we examine his strategy on established principles of the art of war. The First Army was withdrawn from the great stronghold of Lorraine, and while part of it was sent off to reduce the fortresses which still barred the Moselle and the Meuse—Mézières, Montmédy, Thionville and Verdun—the other part was marched to the valley of the Oise, to strengthen the external zone of the forces besieging Paris. Verdun was mastered in a few days; but the remaining places held out for a time, and some weeks passed before the invading host, retarded by bad weather and the bands of the rising, attained the verge of Picardy and the Isle of France. Of the Second Army, one corps[1] was despatched to Paris, to take part in the work of the siege; and the remaining[2] three corps were moved southwards, in order to put down the provincial levies gathering between Berri and Franche Comté, and especially to crush the French Army of the East,[3] which, as we have seen, had become menacing. The troops,

[1] The 2nd corps.

[2] The 9th, 3rd and 10th corps.

[3] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. p. 225. The real strength of this army was long underrated at the German headquarters.

joyous at their release from Metz, though their ranks had been largely thinned by disease, moved steadily on a wide front, through the broad and vine-clad plains of Champagne, and they had soon reached the line of the Upper Seine and the Aube, approaching the great table-land of Langres. Their march, however, even in this open country, had been harassed in places by the swarms of free-shooters, which buzzed around them and occasionally stung.

The resistance of France, at this juncture, however, seemed chiefly confined to the great centre of Paris, and Moltke's main object was to secure his position around the beleaguered city. He still believed that its fall could not be distant; but its defences, he knew, had been immensely strengthened; its defiant attitude had changed by degrees his sentiments of derisive contempt; and he had resolved that assurance should be made doubly sure, in a contest on which he had risked everything. The work of fortifying and improving the zone of investment had gone on since the first moment; by this time it had, perhaps, been made impassable by the Parisian levies; and the idea of bombarding the capital had been entertained, though, owing to the absence of the huge siege train required, this could not be attempted for two or three months. The first care of Moltke was to add largely to the numbers of the besieging armies, originally, we have seen, comparatively small, but increasing since the beginning of the siege. The two corps, left at Sedan, had come up long before, as

we have had occasion to point out;[1] another, marched from Germany to the camps round Metz, had, after a halt of a few days only, been directed upon the French capital; a third, we have said, was just arriving; and the forces of the besiegers had, by degrees, been augmented by large bodies of Landwehr hastening eagerly to a war which had become national. The besieging armies, which in September were not more than 150,000 strong, exceeded 250,000 by the second week of November; and a force of 40,000 or 50,000 men was joined to the masses already spread behind the lines drawn around Paris. By these means the investing circle was made much more able to resist attack; and the gap at the west, though still weakly occupied, was closed by a choice veteran body, the Landwehr of the renowned Prussian Guard.

The external zone beyond the besiegers' lines became the next object of Moltke's attention. This girdle, composed of many detachments, placed irregularly along an immense circumference, had been, we have said, from the first incomplete; but this weakness had not appeared dangerous, as long as France had remained prostrate. It had become necessary to add to its strength, as the national rising developed itself; and the bodies of troops, which had scoured the districts around Paris and put down resistance, especially of horsemen, had been increased. Considerable reinforcements were sent

[1] The 13th corps, composed of a regular and a Landwehr division.

to these; and if ominous sounds of incessant war gathered on every side round the German camps, Moltke thought the situation of affairs secure, for he still underrated the power of France, and was sceptical as to her patriotic purpose. To the east the German communications were safe; the 14th corps, led by Werder, occupied Alsace; the Second Army was on the verge of Franche Comté, and would overwhelm resistance along that frontier. There were assemblages of armed men in the northern provinces, and these had been called an Army of the North; but the First Army would soon dispose of these, and in any case would keep them away from Paris. There seemed nothing to apprehend from the south; the Army of the Loire had, we have said, been routed, and forced to seek refuge beyond the river, and the 1st Bavarian corps, which had won this victory, after having been detached from the siege of Paris, held Orleans and the whole adjoining region, with the roads and railways that led to the capital. The west and the north-west were the only points from which danger appeared possible: forces, large in numbers, at least, it was rumoured, were gathering together in the wide tracts extending between the Eure and the Mayenne, and obviously it was from this direction, the most remote from the main German armies, that an attempt to assail the besiegers of Paris and to fall on their rear might be deemed probable. Two considerable divisions were, therefore, placed in the fertile country around Chartres, in order at once

to oppose an enemy coming from the west and to cover the investing circle on this front; and cavalry was sent in every direction to overrun the adjoining provinces, and to bring in to the besiegers supplies. The external zone was thus strengthened at one of its parts, but the Bavarians at Orleans were left without support, and almost isolated along the Loire.[1]

These dispositions appeared sufficient to render the besiegers of Paris secure, and to lead to the defeat of the provincial armies. They were founded, however, on false assumptions, and they were the prelude of a reverse for the arms of Germany, which might easily have ended in a grave disaster. Moltke, at his headquarters, which had been placed at Versailles, had been misinformed as to the true positions and numbers of the new French levies; the insurrectionary bands, the hard-

[1] It is very difficult to estimate, even approximately, the strength of the German armies around Paris and in the adjoining districts at this period. The Army of the Meuse, when the siege began, consisted of the 4th and the 12th corps and of the Guards, the Third Army of the 5th and 6th corps, of the 2nd Bavarian corps, and of the Würtemberghers. To these should be added the 11th and 1st Bavarian corps of the Third Army, marched from Sedan within a few days: the 13th Corps, composed of two divisions, and the 2nd corps of the Second Army moved, on different occasions, from Metz, and the Landwehr of the Guard, with other bodies of Landwehr. The "Prussian Staff History" passes lightly over these reinforcements, perhaps in order to conceal, as much as possible, the risk incurred in the great march on Paris. But they probably were more than 100,000 men, and as the besiegers were at first 150,000 strong, they must now, it is likely, have exceeded 250,000.

ships of winter, and the obstacles of an enclosed country had made the exploring of the German cavalry much less perfect than it had previously been,[1] and he was mistaken as to the real situation of affairs. On strategic principles he had rightly judged that danger was most to be feared from the west and the north-west, but the French Army of the West was, as yet, a phantom, a mere collection of the rudest levies, and he had made no provision to meet an attack from the direction where it had become imminent. Gambetta had placed the Army of the Loire, after its late defeat, into the experienced hands of D'Aurelle, a distinguished veteran; and under the care of a chief endowed with the faculty of command and organizing power, the beaten force quickly acquired consistency, self-reliance, and real military worth. Meanwhile, the energy of the new ruler of France, and the prodigious exertions of the French people, had succeeded in increasing the Army of the Loire to an extent not even suspected at Versailles. A new corps, the 16th, had been formed, and this body, about 30,000 strong, and partly composed of good soldiers, was entrusted to Chanzy, a young general of brigade, who was to prove that France still had a great commander. The Germans were thus really menaced from the south, and the position of

[1] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. i. pp. 264, 266, 283. "Even as late as the middle of November," it is acknowledged that "no success had attended the endeavours to gain a clear idea of the positions and intentions of the adversary."

the Bavarians, spread around Orleans and completely exposed, invited attack. The main part of the Army of the Loire, originally called, we have said, the 15th corps, was moved from the camps where it had been reformed; it crossed the Loire and joined the 16th, and towards the close of October a plan was combined for falling upon the Bavarians in force, and for retaking Orleans in the event of success. The movement was to be made by D'Aurelle and Chanzy, advancing along the northern bank of the river, with their united forces; and it was to be seconded by a part of the 15th corps, which was to descend the Loire from above Orleans, and to close on the rear of the enemy when assailed in front.

This operation was ill-designed in one essential point, and was retarded by unfortunate delays; but it was, nevertheless, to a large extent successful. By the 7th of November, D'Aurelle and Chanzy, having marched from the tract around Mer and Beaugency, had reached the forest of Marchenoir, not far from the plains to the east of Orleans, and a skirmish with a hostile detachment was fought. Tann, the Bavarian general, a skilful officer, had been already put on his guard owing to the time that had been lost by the French, and that had deprived them of the advantage of a surprise; and having learned that the enemy was in force before him, and that a French division was approaching his rear, he evacuated Orleans with praiseworthy quickness, and drawing all his available troops together,

made preparations to accept a defensive battle. He had from 20,000 to 23,000 men in hand; and he chose a strong position, protected by a brook, and by villages and buildings hastily fortified, which extended from Baccon, an outpost on the left to Coulmiers, and St. Sigismund on the right, points in front of a wood not far from Orleans. He was attacked on the 9th by D'Aurelle and Chanzy, at the head of, perhaps,[1] 50,000 men, and the young Army of the Loire, which had been supplied with artillery of a superior kind, gave proof[2] of real excellence on the field and gained a complete, if not a decisive, victory. The Bavarians were driven from Baccon and Coulmiers; their line which, as if in contempt of their enemy, had been spread over too wide a distance, was broken through on their left and centre; and it was a mistake only of a French cavalry chief that prevented their right from being defeated, and their whole army, perhaps,

[1] The account of the Battle of Coulmiers in the "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 271-79, is not candid or accurate. It estimates the French at 70,000 men; but this includes the isolated division of the 15th corps, which did not get near the field. By far the most complete and impartial account will be found in General Dérrécagaix's work, vol. ii. 292, 322. He rightly says that the French were about 50,000 strong.

[2] M. de Freycinet, "La Guerre en Province," p. 98, gives us this extract from a letter written by a Bavarian officer taken prisoner at Coulmiers: "Il n'y a plus d'armée de La Loire disait on, les forces de l'ennemi sont epuisées, et maintenant je trouve tout un corps bien organisé avec une artillerie formidable, une cavalerie admirablement monté, et une infanterie qui nous a prouvé ce dont elle était capable à la bataille de Coulmiers."

from being cut off from its line of retreat, the main roads of Paris. Tann ably drew off his shattered forces, having lost more than 3000[1] men, including prisoners taken at Orleans and on the field, and his escape must be pronounced fortunate. But if the French had unquestionably won the day, an untoward incident had occurred that deprived them of the best fruits of victory. The division which had descended the Loire, and was to have fallen upon the enemy's rear, had not been able to take part in the battle, another, among repeated instances, how hazardous it is to attempt to unite widely separated forces on a given field, though under peculiar conditions, as at Sadowa, this course may be justified, nay, may be the best.[2]

The Battle of Coulmiers, as it was called, would have ended in the annihilation of the 1st Bavarian corps, but for a tactical mistake on the field, and for the false strategy which kept a whole division from it. The consequences, however, were real and striking. The apparition of the Army of the Loire had surprised and discomfited the German leaders;

[1] "The Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 279, states that the loss of the Bavarians at Coulmiers was only "about 800 men." D'Aurelle and Chanzy mention that the prisoners alone were from 2000 to 2500. Major Adams' "Great Campaigns," p. 582, puts the Bavarian loss at "4000 men and two guns." It was certainly more than 3000.

[2] This is well pointed out by General Derrécagaix, "La Guerre Moderne," vol. ii. 315. His observations, however, are little more than a repetition of what Napoleon has over and over again laid down.

the external zone that covered the besiegers' lines had been broken by a victorious enemy, whose strength had not been even suspected; and the dangerous position of the German armies thrown around Paris, on a vast circumference, and liable to attack, had become manifest. Something like consternation prevailed at Versailles; a message was despatched to Prince Frederick Charles to hasten by forced marches to the aid of Tann; the two divisions near Chartres, which had been placed under the command of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, were ordered to hurry off in the same direction; and amidst exclamations in the German camp that the siege was "a gigantic mistake," Moltke made preparations, it is all but certain,[1] to raise the siege and to abandon his lines, should the Army of the Loire appear near the city. This event probably would have occurred, had D'Aurelle overwhelmed his foe at Coulmiers; and even as affairs stood, it

[1] The evidence that Moltke intended to raise the siege of Paris at this conjuncture is very strong. The fact was asserted by several writers at the time, notably by the correspondent of *The Times*, "Campaign of 1870, 191;" and it has been repeated by Major Adams, "Great Campaigns," p. 583. It is remarkable, too, that a German journal, believed to have been under Moltke's influence, referred, at this very time, to Napoleon's raising of the siege of Mantua in 1796, at the approach of Würmser; and the silence of the "Prussian Staff History" after these statements, is significant in the extreme. The only evidence the other way is a declaration by Moltke himself, "Précis of Franco-German War," vol. ii. 303, English translation, that it "never entered anybody's head to leave Versailles;" but this distinctly refers to a sortie from Paris, and to a different occasion.

might, perhaps, have happened. Tann had fallen back on Artenay and Toury, covering the roads to Paris, after his defeat; but his troops had lost heart and had greatly suffered, and he could not have stopped the march of the Army of the Loire, now joined by its late absent division, flushed with victory, and nearly fourfold in numbers. The Bavarians, too, were without support; even the heads of one corps of Prince Frederick Charles were leagues distant on the 14th of November; only a few troops of the Grand Duke had reached Tann on the 11th and 12th; and had D'Aurelle, therefore, pressed boldly forward, he might have beaten both his adversaries in detail, and gained a signal and most important triumph.[1] In that case he would doubtless have advanced on Paris, and Moltke, we believe, would have raised the siege.

D'Aurelle, however, did not adopt the course, which, hazardous certainly as it would have been, might, as affairs were, have been, perhaps, the wisest. Had he routed Tann and the Grand Duke,

[1] This operation is indicated by Chanzy, one of the most truthful and modest of men: "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," p. 35: "Il eût peutêtre été possible en mettant à profit l'enthousiasme produit par la victoire du 9, d'atteindre et d'achever de battre l'armée du Général de Tann, avant qu'elle eût pu être secourue par celle du grand duc, sur laquelle on se serait porté ensuite, et de prendre ainsi les Allemands en détail." Major Adams, "Great Campaigns," p. 581, though an ardent admirer of the Germans, says: "A little more judgment and decision on D'Aurelle's part would have involved Von der Tann in a signal disaster, and perhaps have seriously affected the German investment."

he would, in all probability, have pressed on to Paris, under the stress of opinion in his camp; but he paused after Coulmiers, for two or three days, and he made no attempt to draw near the capital. With the possible exception of the chief of his staff,[1] none of his lieutenants, not even the gifted Chanzy, whose powers were already becoming manifest, proposed, it is just to say, a bold march northwards; and it is impossible to deny that considerations of weight existed against an operation of the kind. Though the Second Army was still out of reach, the most advanced corps of Prince Frederick Charles was now only three or four marches distant, the two corps in the rear only seven or eight marches; and obviously there would have been grave peril in moving on Paris, with a certain prospect of having to assail an enemy in front, while a second enemy was threatening the assailants in flank. D'Aurelle fell back on Orleans with the Army of the Loire; the Bavarians and the Grand Duke gave him little alarm; but it was the approach of the Second Army endangering his right, which, he[2] tells us himself, was the principal cause that he did not endeavour to press forward, and that he made a retrograde movement. This proves, with a clearness not often observed, how fatal to the cause of France was the untimely and shameful surrender of Metz. Had

[1] M. de Freycinet, "La Guerre en Province," p. 102. This statement is flatly contradicted by D'Aurelle, p. 142.

[2] D'Aurelle, "La Première Armée de la Loire," p. 134. The passage is too long to be quoted, but deserves attention.

the fortress held out a few weeks longer, as, beyond question, ought to have been the case, Prince Frederick Charles would have been far away from the theatre of the war on the Loire; and, in that event, Coulmiers might have changed the whole course of the struggle. But for the guilt and treason of Bazaine, the Army of the Loire, despite other mishaps, would very probably have reached Paris; and if so, Moltke would have raised the siege, with results which must have powerfully made for France. "The capitulation came in the very nick of time," is an admission made by a German writer.

Owing to a series of accidents, of which the most disastrous was the premature and unexpected fall of Metz, Coulmiers had not had the decisive results which probably might have flowed from it. It had shown, however, as if by a sudden flash of light, how, notwithstanding their prodigious success, the position of the Germans had become precarious, and how colossal were the efforts of France,[1] and Moltke thenceforward had no illusions

[1] The change in Moltke's views as to the war is most remarkable. We have seen what these were in September and October. He wrote in the following strain after Coulmiers, though he still held the false belief that Frenchmen were dragooned into the defence of their country: "Letters," vol. ii. p. 66, English translation: "After Sedan and Metz it may have seemed to you in Berlin that all was over; but we have been having a very anxious time. The greater part of our forces are detained round Paris, and the obstinate endurance of Bazaine's army—though he is now proclaimed a traitor—hindered the earlier advance of fresh troops. . . . Surrounded as we are by

as to the nature of the tremendous contest. Opinion, too, in Europe veered round once more;[1] after having scoffed at the efforts of France, it began to speculate on her prospects of success, and it did not pronounce against her again, the scales of Fate were so long in suspense. It is no idle task, as has been suggested by more than one of the courtiers of Fortune, to conjecture what might have been the results, had the Army of the Loire, as might well have happened, compelled the abandonment of the siege of Paris. It is easy to say that Moltke would have crushed D'Aurelle and Chanzy with a single stroke, and would have drawn his lines round the capital again before Trochu and Ducrot would have known what had happened, and it is easy to say that the German armies would have suffered a tremendous disaster, assailed from within and without as they moved off from the city. The truth probably lies between either extreme.

hostile bands of armed men, within the circle we have had to face desperate sorties, and treachery and surprises from without. Now when the whole French army has migrated, as prisoners to Germany, there are more men under arms in France than at the beginning of the war. Belgium, England and America supply them with weapons in abundance, and if a million were brought in to-day, within a few days we should have a million more to deal with."

[1] Even a cursory reader of the Press of Europe, before and after Coulmiers, will be convinced of the truth of this sentence. The following telegram, from the *Daily News* Correspondent of Berlin, sent at the close of November, is very significant: "The war news from the front is confused and contradictory. Much uneasiness is felt here."

Had the siege been raised, the leaders in Paris could not have failed to be informed of the fact; in that case they would, almost certainly, have destroyed a large part of the besiegers' lines, and have brought in the immense supplies accumulated by the enemy for weeks; Ducrot, there is every reason to suppose, would have conducted an army outside the capital, and in this state of affairs the resumption of the siege would have been difficult in the extreme, if not impossible. In that event a complete change would have passed over the scenes of the war, and France might have obtained an honourable peace. Military considerations, however, are not sufficient, as elements of a judgment on this subject; higher considerations must be taken into account. Dénain saved France from impending ruin, and sent her again on the path of victory; Valmy rescued her from the yoke of the conqueror, and gave her her first triumph over old Europe, and such an event as the raising of the siege of Paris might have led to results not less wonderful.

Having fallen back, we have said, on Orleans, D'Aurelle placed the Army of the Loire in a series of camps in front of the city. His purpose was to await the attack of the German armies in these positions, an event which he believed at hand, and should he succeed in beating the enemy, he thought that he would be able to advance on Paris, and effectually to assist the beleaguered capital. To strengthen his camps, a double set of lines was constructed round Orleans to the north; heavy

batteries were mounted with large ship guns, and thousands of peasants took part in the work; and the defences, extending on a two-fold arc, the first along the edge of the Great Wood of Orleans, the second at some distance beyond, became formidable in a few days. D'Aurelle, in a word, sought to make a Torres Vedras near the Loire; when the barrier had broken the power of the Germans, he would then, and only then, assume the offensive. He was confident that, under these conditions, his army[1] was equal to great achievements; and if this strategy of passive defence was probably not the very best, it is to be regretted, in the interests of France, that he was not permitted to carry it out. It deserves notice, however, that it was not approved by Chanzy, a chief of a much higher type, though he faithfully obeyed his superior's orders. Chanzy, for many reasons, wished that his corps[2] should be moved at least to the line of the Conie, a small river still further to the north; it was to hold a menacing attitude from this position, and

[1] D'Aurelle's estimate of the quality of the Army of the Loire was somewhat exaggerated; but it was far nearer the truth than the accounts that represented it as an assemblage of rude levies: p. 278. "Le Général D'Aurelle a toujours eu la ferme conviction, partagée par tous les officiers généraux sous ses ordres et par tous les gens du métier, que cette armée de la Loire, animée d'un ardent patriotisme, et d'un courage éprouvé, pouvait, étant réunie culbuter l'armée prussienne."

[2] See this remarkable despatch of Chanzy: "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire, p. 49. Every line written by this great general should be carefully studied.

to interpose between the enemy's forces, at this moment widely apart; and had this advice been followed, the events of the next few weeks would have certainly taken a different turn. While D'Aurelle was thus fortifying his lines near Orleans, a new direction had been given to the German armies. Prince Frederick Charles, indeed, whose foremost troops had reached Fontainebleau by the 14th of November, was ordered to advance and hold the country between Orleans and the main roads to Paris; he was to close the external zone where it had been broken. But the Grand Duke, who had just joined Tann, a few days after D'Aurelle's success, was again moved away to the west; his forces and those of Tann were united, and they were placed once more in the tract around Chartres, in order to cover the siege on this front, to collect supplies, and to resist the enemy. This eccentric movement was another mistake, due to a strange ignorance of the operations of the French.[1] Moltke had never ceased to believe in a French Army of the West, he had, as we have often seen before, lost contact with a not distant foe; beset by hindrances still on the increase, he did not possess, in the

[1] This is admitted by the "Prussian Staff History," part ii. vol. i. pp. 283, 291. "All observations pointed to the impending attack of the enemy from the west. . . . The proceedings of the French Army of the Loire after the engagement at Coulmiers had led the German Head-quarters Staff to believe that that Army would unite with the troops assembled at Nogent Le Rotrou and behind the Eure, and after this junction press forward from the west towards Paris."

highest degree, the extraordinary gift of Napoleon in divining the movements of an opponent, and, despite the telegraph and mechanism of the kind, he had come to a conclusion, absolutely wrong, that the Army of the Loire had broken up from Orleans, and had come into line with the Army of the West, and that both were advancing upon the capital. The Grand Duke and Tann were, therefore, sent in a direction completely away from the enemy; there was nothing like a real Army of the West; D'Aurelle was in his camp at Orleans, and this movement of Moltke was altogether false. The error was discovered ere long, and the Grand Duke and Tann had soon spread their troops over the rich tract between the Eure and the Sarthe, levying contributions, and waging, with increasing fierceness, the war of reprisals already begun. But a wide gap existed between their forces and those of Prince Frederick Charles, and, as affairs stood, this was even now perilous.

The Second Army, meanwhile, had reached its positions, between Orleans and the chief ways of Paris; by the 21st of November it stood on a line from Angerville to Pithiviers, and, on the east, to Montargis. Its three corps, wasted by sickness and hardship, did not probably exceed 60,000 men,[1] and Prince Frederick Charles had little doubt of the coming fate of the untrained Army

[1] According to the "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. i. 313, the infantry of the Second Army did not, at this time, exceed 45,000 men.

of the Loire. He contemplated an immediate advance on Orleans, with the victors of Mars La Tour and Gravelotte, and reserving this exploit for himself, he sent the Grand Duke, who had become his subordinate, still further west, to descend from Le Mans, on Tours, the seat of the Republican Government, despised and detested in the Prussian camps. But, in the meantime, Gambetta had made preparations for a new and mighty effort.[1] With wonderful energy and administrative power, he had formed a 17th corps on the Loire, near Blois, and an 18th far higher up, at Nevers; he had, with admirable secrecy and skill, moved a 20th corps from the Army of the East; these arrays had been drawn, by degrees, towards the Army of the Loire, and the uniting masses,[2] from 150,000 to 200,000 strong, were being combined on a front extending from the eastern verge of the Great Wood of Orleans to the Forest of Marchenoir on the west. A concentrated force, largely superior in numbers at least, was being thus opposed to a widely scattered force, and though the new levies were by no means equal in quality to the troops of D'Aurelle, still the Army of the Loire, thus

[1] Even the Prussian Staff cannot withhold its admiration of the "surprising activity" of the French, and the "indomitable will" of Gambetta.

[2] These numbers cannot be even nearly ascertained. M. de Freycinet speaks of 250,000 men, the Prussian Staff of 200,000. D'Aurelle acknowledges "145,000 effectives" only.

immensely increased, was, in its present position, a grave danger to the separated and disseminated German armies, nay, even to the besiegers of Paris. About the 24th of November, Prince Frederick Charles became aware, for the first time, of a situation before unknown, and unsuspected once more at Versailles; he drew his three corps more closely together, and he directed the Grand Duke to hasten to his aid, sending cavalry westward to join his colleague. The Grand Duke, however, who had been moving in many columns, in all directions, from near Le Mans to Nogent le Rotrou, and Vendôme, and who had been ordered by Moltke to advance on Beaugency, required time to collect his forces; and he was not on the Loir — an affluent of the much greater Loire — on a line between Bonneval and Châteaudun, until the 27th and 28th of November, at a considerable distance still from the Second Army.

The position of the armies around Orleans was now one of peculiar interest. On the 28th of November, the Second Army, which had been gathering together for some days, was on a front extending about forty miles from Beaune La Rolande on the east, to Orgères westwards, covering the avenues to Paris from the Great Wood of Orleans. But the Grand Duke, though a thin line of horsemen, brought him in contact with Prince Frederick Charles, was still only just moving from the Loir —if, indeed, he was in motion at all—there was still a gap between his force and his colleague, a gap,

too, by no means easy to close, and one which, had Chanzy held the Conie, as he had recommended, could not have been closed without running the risk of a most hazardous battle. On the side of the French, the 18th and the 20th corps, the right wing of the Army of the Loire, held positions around Maizières and Boiscommon, not far from the German left at Beaune La Rolande; the centre composed of the 15th corps, lay between Chévilly and Chilleurs sur Bois, at the edge of the Great Wood of Orleans; Chanzy and the 16th corps were about Peravy, in communication with D'Aurelle and the 15th; and the 17th corps, the extreme French left, which had been threatening the Grand Duke, was closing in from Marchenoir towards Chanzy. The whole Army of the Loire was thus concentrated on a front much shorter than that of the Germans; its columns were near each other at all points, and it was assembled in camps behind formidable lines, which alone gave it a great advantage. Strategically its position was, beyond comparison, superior to that of its divided foes; for the defensive it was admirably placed, it might even hope to take the offensive, to defeat the enemy in its front and to reach Paris, and this had been due, in the main, to Gambetta, who had drawn together this immense array of forces, and had concealed the operation from Moltke at Versailles.

The military situation, so in favour of France, was suddenly changed by a disastrous incident.

Gambetta was a greater man than Danton, but he had the temper of an imperious Dictator, and he had too much in common, in the conduct of war, with the delegates of the Convention who, in 1793-4, imposed their rule on reluctant generals. He had been in communication with Trochu and Ducrot; he was feverishly impatient to relieve Paris, and he had already urged D'Aurelle to advance northwards, to try to reach Pithiviers, and to march on the capital. D'Aurelle had succeeded in putting a stop to an enterprise he deemed too hazardous, though in order to please the discontented minister he had sent part of the 15th corps to Chilleurs sur Bois; but in a few days Gambetta resolved to attempt an operation on which he had set his heart. His eagerness to go to the assistance of Paris was quickened by a desire to protect Tours, threatened, we have seen, by the Grand Duke's forces, and he took on himself to order a movement, which, he was convinced, would at least promote his objects. He peremptorily directed the 18th and 20th corps, the right wing of D'Aurelle's army, to push forward to Beaune La Rolande, and to fall on the 10th German corps, the extreme left of the Second Army; he hoped thus to gain a position from which to march on Paris, and also to compel the Grand Duke to draw off from Tours. The movement, if undertaken at all, ought obviously to have been made by the whole French army, especially as Chanzy, at this moment, had still a chance of thrusting himself in between the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick

Charles, but, attempted as it was, it naturally failed, and the blame for the failure must fall on Gambetta. On the 28th of November, the 18th and 20th corps attacked the 10th at Beaune La Rolande; the French stormed some petty villages, but the Germans had entrenched themselves in fortified posts. Although greatly inferior in numbers, they steadily maintained their ground for hours, and the arrival of a division of the 3rd corps at last turned the scale in their favour. The battle was in no sense decisive, but a premature and ill-conceived effort had shattered the right wing of the Army of the Loire, and the German leaders had been thoroughly aroused.[1]

The Grand Duke was now approaching the Second Army, being concentrated in front of the Great Wood of Orleans. Chanzy[2] beheld, with an anguish he could not suppress, his enemy defiling within striking distance, and exposing his flank to a formidable attack, and an opportunity was lost to the French. The position, however, of the Army of the Loire, though the 15th corps was somewhat too divided, and the 18th and 20th had suffered much, was, nevertheless, excellent for the defensive; the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles had probably not 100,000 men, and they could hardly

[1] The "Prussian Staff History," part ii. vol. i. 291, 321, gives an inadequate account of this whole series of operations. They should be carefully studied in D'Aurelle and M. de Freycinet's volumes. The Prussian Staff states that the three brigades of the 10th corps engaged at Beaune La Rolande were only 11,000 strong. If so, they must have been terribly reduced by disease and other losses.

[2] "La Deuxième Armée de La Loire," p. 56.

have defeated a much more numerous force strongly entrenched behind well fortified lines. At this crisis the fair hopes of France were injured by Gambetta for the second time. With powers of organization of the highest order, he had not the sagacity and calm judgment which have enabled some great men, though in civil life, to indicate generally what ought to be done in war, and his impatience had now overpassed all restraints. He had been informed by a balloon, which had dropped in Norway, and had therefore sent the intelligence late, that Ducrot was about to attempt to break out from Paris, and, on the 30th of November, he insisted through M. de Freycinet, his subordinate, at a council of war, convened for the purpose, that the Army of the Loire must march on Pithiviers, attack the enemy, and try to reach the capital. The operation was to begin next day, and D'Aurelle and Chanzy protested in vain against a movement which each declared would be fatal. The orders of the young Dictator, however, were final, and the two chiefs thought they were bound to obey.[1]

The movement began on the 1st of December; it was inevitably ill-combined and precipitate. Chanzy and the 16th corps, with the 17th in the rear, advanced from the left against the Grand Duke; the 15th corps, the French centre, scarcely stirred, for it

[1] This obedience, however, to the ruler *de facto* of France, practically on the spot, was very different from Macmahon's weak compliance before Sédan.

was the pivot on which the army would turn in making to the north-east for Pithiviers, and the French right, the 18th and 20th corps, was left inactive, and, as it were, out of sight, owing, it is to be feared, to a dispute between D'Aurelle and Gambetta. Not one half, therefore, of the Army of the Loire was employed in an effort against an enemy completely united by this time, and disaster could be the only result. On the 1st Chanzy attacked the Grand Duke, and gained at Villepion promising success, but when he attempted on the following day to assail his adversary, who had fallen back on Loigny, and placed his troops in very strong position, the event was altogether different. He ably directed, indeed, a hard fought battle, and the losses of the Germans, who in numbers seem to have been nearly equal to the French, at least, in the first part of the day, scarcely fell short of his loss on the field, a clear indication of the skill in tactics, for which he was to become conspicuous. But his young troops were no match for their veteran foes, standing on the defensive, in fortified posts, a panic fell on his right wing, and he was only extricated from defeat at hand, by a part of the 15th corps hastening to his aid.

This reverse checked the advance of the Army of the Loire, engaged prematurely, and nearly half paralyzed. The operations of Moltke, up to this time, had been marked by ignorance of the facts, and had been, in a great degree, mistaken. He had wrongly sent the Grand Duke to the west; he had

really been surprised by the enormous addition made by Gambetta to the Army of the Loire. It was by accident only that the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles had effected their junction; and had the forces of the French been well directed he might have seen another defeat of the arms of Germany, and perhaps been compelled to raise the siege of Paris. He was now, however, to have his revenge, and his decision was formed with characteristic energy. When informed by the telegraph of the check of Chanzy,[1] he ordered Prince Frederick Charles instantly to attack, and his orders were carried out with decisive results, largely owing to disastrous mistakes of the French. The Prince, leaving the 18th and 20th corps, which had remained motionless during all this time, and, quickly drawing his forces together, swooped in irresistible might on D'Aurelle's centre, the 15th corps, already divided and the success of the German onset was complete. The French, indeed, gave proof of heroic courage; they fought stubbornly for nearly two days, and retreated at first in excellent order, but they were outnumbered at the decisive point. The young soldiers of the 15th corps could not endure the incessant strain, and gradually the French centre gave way and was broken. The double line of entrenchments was carried,[2] and the Germans ere long had entered

[1] "Prussian Staff History," part ii. vol. i. p. 344.

[2] The bravery displayed by the French in this retreat is attested by many eye-witnesses. All Frenchmen had joined to defend their country. The Prince de Joinville had come from exile, and

Orleans again, in the flush of hard bought but undoubted victory. Yet D'Aurelle conducted the retreat ably; Chanzy fell off to the left with the 16th and 17th corps, and Bourbaki, who had not returned to Metz after his mission to the Empress, referred to before, drew off the 18th and 20th corps on the right, having been made their chief at the last moment.

Superficial writers, following the worshippers of success, have interpreted these operations, from first to last, as the necessary result of a conflict between trained and regular troops and rude levies. This, nevertheless, is a complete mistake, though it is not pretended that the Army of the Loire could be compared, as an instrument of war, to the armies of the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles. But it was in no sense a force to be despised; it was greatly superior to its foes in numbers, and its disastrous defeat is to be mainly ascribed to faulty direction, ill-starred and manifest. It had a distinct advantage on the field of manœuvre, owing to the separation of the enemies in its front, until Gambetta recklessly interfered; and had Chanzy been at this moment its chief he might perhaps have beaten the Grand Duke and led his victorious troops to the capital. Even after the battle of Beaune La Rolande the French around Orleans were probably safe; and it was the fatal movement which Gambetta commanded that almost inevitably proved

was in the lines of Orleans; Charette, a descendant of the hero of La Vendée, fell on this occasion.

ruinous. That operation itself would not have been so calamitous as it soon became, had not the French right wing been left wholly useless; this really was the principal cause that Prince Frederick Charles was enabled to attack the centre of D'Aurelle in overwhelming force, to break it, and to gain a decisive triumph. This series of reverses was chiefly due to presumptuous interference with the French chiefs, leading to a number of disastrous errors; and it may safely be asserted that it would not have occurred had Chanzy had the supreme command, or had D'Aurelle been allowed to carry out his projects. As for the operations of the Germans, they were marred by misconceptions of many kinds, but, when made thoroughly aware of the facts, Moltke sent his thrust home with remarkable skill, and was admirably seconded by Prince Frederick Charles.[1]

We pass from the banks of the Loire to the Seine, where Paris remained erect and defiant. The belligerents had gone on, since October, in strengthening the investing and defensive zones, spread in a double circle round the beleaguered capital. The besiegers, we have seen, had been largely reinforced; the gap on the western front had been filled, and the lines drawn to repel attacks from the city had been made more than ever impassable. The besieged, how-

[1] The real causes of the defeats of the French before Orleans are set forth by the Correspondent of the *Times*, "Campaign of 1870–1," pp. 201–9. Major Adams, "Great Campaigns," pp. 586, 7, has evidently had this book in view, in his comments, but he does not refer to it; he merely says it was the work "of an excellent pen."

ever, had been not less active; they had slightly enlarged the positions they held behind the forts; they had multiplied batteries and entrenchments, so that the enceinte was completely shielded; and they had placed gunboats on the Seine, and long lines of waggons, armed with cannon and clad with iron, which formed movable points for attack and defence. Meantime extraordinary progress was made in the formation and training of the Parisian levies. The National Guards were now a huge army in themselves, and, though partly composed of bad elements, especially in their elected officers, they were, nevertheless, animated by patriotic fervour, and were amply sufficient to defend the walls, and even to furnish a contingent for sterner duties. The assemblages of regular troops, of Gardes Mobiles, of veterans, and of choice volunteers, which had been acquiring military power by degrees, had long ceased to be an armed multitude; they had become two armies in a real sense, of course far from equal to the Germans in their front, but capable of daring and persistent efforts. These armies were now 170,000 strong; one, called the Second Army, under the command of Ducrot; the other, the Third, under that of Vinoy. The incessant exertions of the citizens had supplied their needs in horses and other material, and, recollecting the situation, the results were wonderful. In addition to the garrisons of the forts, composed largely of marines and sailors, the National Guards were more than 200,000 men, and had as their leader Clement

Thomas, one of the victims of the Communist Reign of Terror.

During these weeks Ducrot had matured the project for endeavouring to break out from Paris, to which we have already referred. The first peninsula made by the bends of the Seine had been covered with strongly armed works, of the nature of solid counter approaches, and, protected by the batteries of Valerien, had become an entrenched camp of prodigious strength. Ducrot had everything prepared for a determined effort to force his way, to the west, through the German lines established around the second peninsula, and then to make northwards for Rouen and the sea; and, if the operation was to succeed at all, this probably was the best course to adopt. But Moltke had by this time closed the aperture on the western front, and, though this was still the most assailable point, Ducrot had gradually abandoned the hope of being able—as he had intended—to carry out a really large army with him. He had become convinced that he could not expect to break through the investing circle with more than 50,000 or 60,000 men, assembled rapidly for a sudden attack, and this force would not, in itself, suffice to hold the field or to relieve Paris. He looked, therefore, to the provincial armies, and he earnestly demanded that the Army of the Loire should, after Coulmiers, march swiftly westwards, and, co-operating with the levies of the north, should ascend to the line of the Eure and the Seine, and join hands with the force led out

from the capital. This plan, he has maintained, could have been carried out; and if so, this proves that, if mistaken in fact, Moltke was in theory right in his belief, that the best chance for the relief of Paris was by armies uniting from the west; and, doubtless, it was on this assumption that he persisted in keeping the Grand Duke near Chartres, false as the course was, in the actual state of affairs.

Ducrot had convinced Trochu of the merits of his plan, and had received valuable assistance from him. The resources of Paris had, in fact, been employed for some time in making arrangements for the great sortie from the western front, and for a march to the course of the Oise, when the intelligence of Coulmiers interfered with what was probably Trochu's unsettled purpose. Opinion in the capital turned to a project of breaking out to the south or the south-east, and joining hands with the Army of the Loire, supposed to be on the way from Orleans, and Trochu, who had always believed that the siege of Paris could only be raised by the arrival on the spot of an army of relief, began to yield to the popular demand. Gambetta[1] seems to have taken no part in the decision ultimately formed in the city, but messages passed between him and

[1] Gambetta had much to answer for, and not unreasonably was severely condemned by several French generals for his presumptuous dictation. But a remarkable letter from his pen, cited by General Ducrot, "La Défense de Paris," vol. ii. p. 117, certainly tends to show that he did not mar Ducrot's plan, but rather approved of it.

Trochu, and it was finally agreed that the project of Ducrot should, in existing circumstances, be given up, that the besiegers' lines were not to be assailed from the west, and that the Army of the Loire was not to march in that direction to the aid of the city. The sortie was to be made, therefore, from the south or the south-east, and to be supported by D'Aurelle pressing forward from the Loire; and this had been the cause of the disastrous movements, due to Gambetta's most unwise meddling, which had led to the defeats of the French before Orleans. Ducrot was enjoined to carry out the new arrangement in direct opposition to his hopes and views, and he proceeded to the task with a heavy heart. His first intention was to endeavour to break out from the southern front, in order to join the Army of the Loire as quickly as possible; but the great strength of the besiegers' lines protecting the German communications with Versailles, compelled him to abandon this plan, and at the suggestion of a young officer,[1] now the rising hope of the Army of France, he resolved to make the attempt from the east. This, next to the west, was the best direction, as affairs stood, at the present moment. The defensive zone bristled here with whole tiers of batteries, the windings of the Marne afforded protection to an advancing army on both flanks; if once the besiegers' lines were forced the country beyond was easy to traverse, and the enemy on the spot was not in great numbers. But

[1] General Miribel.

precious time was inevitably lost in changing the dispositions for the sortie, and in massing troops and the material required from one side of Paris to the other, and this was probably turned to account by the German commanders.

On the 28th of November, at night, the forts and their supporting defences burst out in thunder, to cover the first great effort of Paris to break forth from her chains. By this time the army of Ducrot had been assembled around Vincennes, and the troops, fired with enthusiastic ardour, eagerly waited for the dawn to obtain the means of passing the course of the Marne hard by. A sudden rise, however, in the waters of the stream prevented the necessary bridges being laid; the effort was put off for a whole day, and this gave the Germans an immense advantage, for it enabled them to collect large masses of troops for the defence of the point that was being menaced, and it deprived the French of all they could gain by a surprise, and from a central position and interior lines. Demonstrations, nevertheless, were made on the 29th at parts of the investing circle, but these false attacks were without result, except that the upland of Avron, an important point, commanding a section of the German lines on the Marne, was captured and occupied by French batteries. On the 30th the effort was made at last, and the Marne having been rapidly bridged, Ducrot's men advanced against the Wurtembergers, and two bodies of the Saxons, entrenched in his front, between Noisy Le

Grand and Cœuilly, their centre holding the hamlet of Villiers, the key of a position of prodigious strength. The onset of the French, covered by a terrific fire from the forts and batteries along the river, was attended at first with marked success; the villages of Champigny and Bry were stormed, but when the assailants reached the main German lines, they were arrested by the defences of Villiers, a mass of walls and buildings almost impregnable. The battle raged confusedly for some hours, Ducrot awaiting the support of his left wing, which had been directed to turn the position of Villiers—the guns from Avron were here to take part—persisted in continuing the onset in front, and his troops were mown down in heaps by the fire from an enemy who suffered comparatively little behind his entrenchments. The long-hoped-for reinforcement appeared at last, but the general in command, by a fatal mistake, attacked Villiers, in turn, in front, and the effort, after a protracted struggle, which cost an immense waste of life, was fruitless. Meanwhile an attack on Cœuilly, on the French right, had been at last repulsed, and the line of the Germans, though severely tried, had proved sufficient to keep back the enemy. Ducrot fell back, at nightfall, on Champigny and Bry, still hoping to renew the fight on the morrow.

While this battle had been raging along the eastern front, a part of Ducrot's forces had been engaged in making a demonstration on Montmesly, in order to keep the enemy in check to the south-east,

and Vinoy had employed the Third French Army in different attacks on Choisy Le Roi to the south, and on Epinay, to the north of the investing circle. These efforts, made under the continuous fire of the forts and batteries, and of the gunboats on the Seine, were attended here and there with partial success; they relieved the pressure on the Second French Army, and prevented reinforcements being sent to Villiers. But if the battle of the 30th was indecisive, this was equivalent to a defeat for the French; the zone of the besiegers had not been forced, and the gain of Champigny and Bry was worthless. Characteristically true to his favourite method,[1] Moltke resolved to assume the offensive again; parts of the 2nd and the 6th corps were marched to the aid of the defenders of Villiers; Fransecky, a hero of Sadowa, was placed at their head, and at the dawn of the day of the 2nd December, the Germans pressed forward to storm Champigny. The French, who, without any means for encampment, had cruelly suffered from cold and privations, were driven at first out of part of the village, surprised, as had so often happened; but Ducrot had strongly entrenched his position, and Champigny was regained after a protracted conflict. Nearly the same results were witnessed at Bry;

[1] "Prussian Staff History," part ii. vol. i. p. 381. This account of the great sortie, and of the battles of the 30th November and the 2nd December, is jejune and inadequate. General Ducrot's account, "La Défense de Paris," vol. ii. p. 80, 289, iii. p. 103, is more complete and impartial. General Vinoy's book too should be read.

and wherever the defensive zone was approached, the power of its fire overcame everything, and the Germans were forced back defeated and baffled. The struggle of the 2nd was again indecisive, but it was not the less a reverse for Ducrot; the lines of the besiegers had proved impregnable, and he had no choice but to recross the Marne, and to fall back with his army on Paris. The retreat was made in good order on the 3rd; but the losses and hardships of the French had been terrible.

In this fierce and prolonged contest Ducrot had proved himself a skilful and resolute soldier.[1] But the enterprise was undertaken against his will; he had little faith in a successful issue; he wished the sortie to be made from the western front, and the change in the operation was of evil omen. Ducrot, too, had been badly treated by Fortune; the sudden

[1] An unwarrantable charge, afterwards withdrawn, was made that Ducrot broke his parole after Sedan; and he has been ridiculed for a rhetorical expression in an address to his troops before the sortie. But he was a very able and valiant warrior, and he rightly insisted that France should fight after Sedan. He interpreted the judgment of History more accurately than Thiers, who wished to temporize, and make an ignominious peace. "La Défense de Paris," vol. ii. p. 76: "'Général,' dit M. Thiers, 'vous parlez comme un soldat, c'est très bien, mais vous ne parlez pas comme un homme politique.' 'Monsieur, je crois également parler en homme politique; une grande nation comme la France, se relève toujours de ses ruines matérielles, elle ne se relève jamais de ses ruines morales. En continuant à defendre pied à pied le sol de la Patrie, notre génération souffrira peutêtre davantage, mais nos enfants béneficieront de l'honneur que nous aurons sauvé.'" Noble words, uttered amidst the scoffs and scepticism of what was called European opinion, but amply confirmed.

rise of the Marne had delayed the attack on Villiers for twenty-four hours at least, and this alone almost assured the defeat of the French arms. He was badly seconded, besides, by his left wing, which, having arrived on the field late, assailed the main position of the Germans in front, instead of endeavouring to turn it, as had been directed, and two or three lesser mistakes were made. But a study of these engagements induces us to think that Ducrot could hardly have succeeded in any event; the zone of the besiegers was too strong to be broken; and even if it had been forced the French would have been pursued, and probably defeated in the open country. It deserves notice, too, that though Ducrot's army was much more numerous than the enemy it assailed, it was so confined to a narrow space that the French were not more than 55,200[1] against 45,000 men at the decisive points, the attacks on Villiers and Cœuilly; and these figures almost prove that success was hopeless, bearing in mind the strength of the German positions. In the battle of the 2nd, according to Ducrot, the numerical superiority was reversed; the Germans were 72,000 to 62,000,[2] and yet, in their efforts against the zone of the defence, they too were, on the whole, worsted.

[1] "La Defense de Paris," vol. ii. p. 286.

[2] Ibid. vol. iii. p. 55. The "Prussian Staff History" is silent on the subject, and must be presumed to acquiesce in these figures, as it is partly compiled from General Ducrot's work. It is unnecessary to refer to German writers, who have described the sortie as the defeat of 100,000 Frenchmen by 20,000 Germans.

It is probable, in fact, that by this time the lines of the besiegers and the lines of the besieged had become impregnable to attack, save through approaches made by the art of the engineer, a possible exception being the western front, covered at this moment by formidable works, where a sortie, combined with a determined effort made by an army of relief from without, might, both Moltke and Ducrot thought, have had some chances of success. But though they failed, the French had been not unworthy of their martial race in this desperate struggle, and they lost more than 9000 men, a result in striking contrast with the trifling of Bazaine.[1] The losses of their enemy were not 2000, such was the protection afforded to the defence at Villiers; the Germans had borne themselves as became good troops, still upheld by the renown of Metz and Sedan.

The arms of Germany had once more triumphed; the Army of the Loire had been rent in twain; the great sortie from Paris had failed; the efforts to relieve the capital had been frustrated. Yet there was little exultation in the German camp; an uneasy feeling of anger pervaded Germany; opinion in Europe refused to predict another succession of German victories. The fall of Metz, a caprice of fortune, had alone saved the besiegers from the gravest perils; the Army of the Loire might, perhaps, have raised the siege; the invaders

[1] The total losses of the French in all these sorties exceeded 12,000 men.

were thrown upon the defensive; they were exposed to attacks of a formidable kind as long as the capital should hold out; and all this had become distinctly manifest. The prodigies, too, of the first part of the war had been followed by a second prodigy, the gigantic national resistance of France; she had risen from the depths of misfortune to show how great was her power; her hastily gathered levies had done wonders, and the chariot-wheels of the once boastful conquerors "drave heavily" through ever-increasing obstacles. Yet Moltke maintained his undaunted attitude; if he tacitly admitted that he had made mistakes in advancing on Paris before the time, and in undervaluing the resources of France, he left nothing undone to repair these errors, and while many around him doubted and feared he manfully stood up against a sea of troubles. His position around Paris was, for the moment, safe; D'Aurelle had been defeated on the Loire; events in the north, which we shall glance at, had been favourable to the German arms, and the great city was, for the present, in eclipse. He continued steadily to forge the chains which, he was convinced, would yet subjugate France—stern, resolute, able, and self-reliant. The besiegers' lines were still further strengthened; the armies which formed the external zone were reinforced in every direction; the severest measures were taken to put down the national resistance where it raised its head; and the march of the invaders was often lit up by the flames of hamlets, revealing the ghastly

spectacle[1] of peasants hung and shot for being found in arms and for striking a blow to defend their country. To sustain him in his task, Moltke could look with confidence to devoted lieutenants of proved skill and to admirably organized military power; and Germany, aflame with national passion, went forth to uphold a mighty conflict which had become an internecine strife of races. The youngest recruits and the oldest men of the Landwehr had been already called into the field, and a fierce impulse sent tens of thousands of warriors, like their Gothic fathers in the distant past, to descend on the lands beyond the Rhine. The final issue of the contest was determined as much, perhaps, by this universal movement as by the regular armies of Germany.

If we turn to the opposite side, the efforts of France had scarcely had a parallel even in her history. Nearly a million of men had been enrolled in arms in Paris and in the provincial levies, and this after the Imperial armies had been carried into Germany captive. The result had been characteristic of an heroic race, and, to a certain extent, it had been successful. The Germans had been decidedly checked; Coulmiers had been a real, if not a fruitful victory; a series of mischances had alone saved the invaders from defeat, perhaps from

[1] These executions are not to be too harshly condemned; they were in accordance with the laws of war. But the franctireurs of France were treated as Napoleon treated the Spanish guerillas; and the sufferings of the one class of victims were disregarded, while the other class was extolled as heroes and martyrs.

disaster. The issue of events was still doubtful; and France, deprived of her organized forces, had risen from under the heel of a conqueror, and had, in a few weeks, made the national defence so powerful, so general, so unyielding that the scales of fortune hung in even balance. But unity and subordination in command were wanting to France at this supreme crisis, not less than well-ordered military force. Gambetta had destroyed as well as created; the defeat of the Army of the Loire is to be ascribed to him; the best chance for the relief of Paris, difficult as it would have been in any event, had been lost by divided counsels and by compliance with thoughtless and idle opinions. Chanzy and D'Aurelle, each of whom could have done much, had been recklessly crossed and thwarted. France did not possess a single uncontrolled leader to make the most of her resources of war, and to carry out operations in the field with a definite aim and a settled purpose; and the armed strength of the nation, inferior as it was to that of an adversary well prepared for years, was wasted unwisely and misdirected. The exertions of France, therefore, grand as they were, were spasmodic, ill-regulated, and, in a great degree, paralyzed; and she was in a death struggle with a gigantic foe, whose military power was perfectly matured, and was directed with admirable energy and skill; who had hundreds of thousands of trained soldiers on foot, and who was animated by passions as ardent as her own. The evil influences that weakened the strength of France were to produce

their effects up to the last moment, and contributed largely to her ultimate defeat. The end, however, had not yet come; she was yet to show that she had not lost the illustrious breed of her great soldiers; she was yet to fight with such intense earnestness, that the invaders remained in continual peril; and she was to give proof of such inherent power, that she was to be formidable even in adverse fortune.

CHAPTER IX.

The First Army in Picardy—Indecisive battle near Amiens—Advance of the First Army into Normandy—Retreat of the French Army of the North—Rouen captured—Fall of Thionville, Montmédy, and, before long, of Mézières—These successes strengthen the position of the Germans round Paris and in France—Preparations for the bombardment of Paris—Werder in Burgundy and Franche Comté—The siege of Belfort—Werder at Dijon—The French Army of the East—Garibaldi and Cremer—The Germans in the east reinforced by part of the First Army—The prospect becomes gloomy for France—Sudden change effected by Chanzy on the Loire—Events on this theatre of the war since the fall of Orleans—Chanzy attacked by the Germans—Protracted and desperate conflict of four days—Great ability of Chanzy—His skill and commanding influence over his troops and their officers—His retreat to the Loire—His masterly arrangements baffle the German commanders—They concentrate their forces against him—He retreats to the Sarthe, occupies Le Mans, and resumes the offensive—The Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles fall back—Heavy losses of their armies—The French Army of the North marches towards the Somme—Indecisive battle on the Hallue—Ineffectual sortie from Paris—The military situation, if unfavourable to France, is still doubtful—Gradual and immense additions to the numbers of the German troops—The efforts of France continue—Reflections on these operations.

THE defeat of the Army of the Loire at Orleans, and the failure of the great sortie from Paris, were not the only ominous signs at this conjuncture, and during the next few weeks, of disaster

for the arms of France. Part of the First Army, after the fall of Metz, had, we have seen, been moved towards the valley of the Oise; and, by the last days of November, it had entered Picardy and the flourishing region around Amiens. It was here opposed by part of the French Army of the North, raised by Gambetta in Artois and Picardy, and given the name of the 22nd corps; and it had passed from Bourbaki's hands, when he had been sent to the Loire, into those of General Farre, a distinguished soldier. The hostile forces encountered each other near Villers Bretonneux, just to the east of Amiens; a fierce and indecisive battle was fought, most honourable to the French [1] levies, but Farre ere long fell back behind the Somme, and Amiens capitulated a few days afterwards. The invaders now overran Normandy, meeting little resistance from a motley force of 40,000 or 50,000 men, the remaining part of the Army of the North; they had soon seized Rouen and the mouths of the Seine, and, like Cæsar's Italian soldiers, they saw, for the first time, the waves of the Channel. La Fère, a petty fortress that molested their rear, was taken before the end of November; and the First Army spread over a vast arc, extending from the Upper Oise to the Eure westwards, covered the

[1] On the French side General Faidherbe's "Campagne de l'Armée du Nord" is our best guide. This experienced and able soldier thus describes the conduct of the French levies at the battle near Amiens: "La bataille d'Amiens avait été très honorable pour une armée aussi rapidement improvisée que l'Armée du Nord." Farre's retreat, indeed, was mainly caused by want of munitions.

Army of the Meuse before the northern front of Paris, from hostile efforts made in that direction. The external zone of the besiegers' forces received thus new additional strength, and, menacing as was the position of the French Army of the North behind the fortresses between the Somme and the frontier —famous in the great wars of Louis XIV.—the Army of the Meuse was thenceforward secure.

Thionville and Montmédy had, ere long, succumbed to the part of the First Army that had been left in the rear, and Mézières surrendered some time afterwards. The fall of these fortresses gave the Germans possession of several railway lines from the east; and as they had mastered Lorraine, and nearly the whole of Alsace, their communications, dangerously straitened at first, were made perfectly open and secure. This enabled the armies besieging Paris, not only to obtain vast stores of supplies, and reinforcements even now needed, but to bring up the immense siege train required for the bombardment; and the transport of the heavy guns and other material—which had been in progress for several weeks, in order to compel, as was hoped in the German camp, the speedy submission of the proud city—was accelerated, and protected from attack.

Meanwhile, Moltke addressed himself to strengthening the external zone in the east, and quelling the efforts of the French levies between the Orléanais and Franche Comté. The French Army of the East had, we have seen, been consider-

ably weakened along this line by the removal of the 20th corps to the Loire; and at present it consisted of two masses, one under Garibaldi, the renowned Italian, who had brought his sword to the assistance of France, and the other under Cremer, an unknown soldier. These bodies, supported by bands of irregulars, and in communication with levies gathering in the south, held the tract between Besançon and the Upper Yonne, sending occasional detachments to the Army of the Loire; and as the chief part of the Second Army had been suddenly moved on Orleans, at the intelligence of the fight at Coulmiers, they held a threatening position upon the extended flank of the German invasion from the Rhine to Paris. Werder, accordingly, and the 14th corps, increased by many thousands of men, had been directed to press the siege of Belfort, almost the last stronghold of the French in Alsace, and he had established himself firmly around Dijon, repelling, from this great central position, the desultory attacks of the Army of the East. A gap, however, existed between the divisions of Werder and the Second Army, and Moltke filled this towards the close of November with the 7th corps of the First Army, detached from Metz, and the fortresses of the Moselle, placing it between Dijon, the Yonne, and the Loing, and in contact with Prince Frederick Charles. Some partial skirmishes were fought along this line, in several instances favourable to the French; but Werder and the chief of the 7th corps successfully maintained

the ground they held, and kept back the ever advancing enemy.

Having secured his position in the north and the east, and made his communications easy and broad, Moltke turned next to the west and south. The external zone along these fronts of the siege appeared at first, in all respects, safe, and able to defy the provincial armies. On the west, indeed, it was only composed of bodies of cavalry and a small force of infantry, the Grand Duke having set off for Orleans; but though levies were being raised in multitudes, in Normandy, Brittany, Maine, and Anjou, these were, as yet, in a backward state, and had not ventured to draw near the capital. The situation for the invaders, after the complete defeat of the Army of the Loire, before Orleans, was deemed, at Versailles, perfectly safe in the south; in fact, all that was to be thought of was to gather in thoroughly the fruits of victory. Prince Frederick Charles and the Grand Duke were in full force in the region between the large bend of the Loire, on both sides of Orleans; they had taken the city, we have seen, again; they held both banks of the great river; they had sent detachments into the Sologne, and they occupied the course of the Loire from Gien to near Meung, the chief body of their troops being on the northern bank. On the other hand, the defeated Army of the Loire had given, for a moment, not a sign of life. The routed centre, the 15th corps, had fled to Salbris, far south of the Loire, and D'Aurelle had been deprived of his com-

mand by a gross act of wrong on the part of Gambetta. The right wing, the 18th and 20th corps, left idly "in the air," after Beaune La Rolande, had made its escape, by Gien, far away; before long it had joined the 15th, and the collected force, in a pitiable state, having been placed in Bourbaki's hands, was ultimately rallied around Bourges. As for Chanzy, and the 16th and 17th corps, it was not exactly known where he was; but the conquerors assumed that the French left wing was a horde of fugitives, like the centre and right, and its speedy annihilation was hourly expected. In the first days of December, the Grand Duke and the Prince were directed "to crush the defeated enemy," and this result seemed easy and certain alike.

By these operations the external zone, originally restricted and feeble in the extreme, had been spread over an immense circumference, and made an almost impassable line; and Paris was enclosed within a double rampart of foes, the one defying the efforts of the besieged, the other keeping back the provincial armies. The communications of the invaders had, too, been assured; the attack on Paris was soon to begin, and the citizens to pass through the ordeal of fire, and outside the capital little seemed to be done but to destroy the remains of the Army of the Loire. And should Paris even stand a bombardment, she would necessarily yield before long to famine; and meanwhile, as her power of resistance slackened, Moltke, now in possession of interior lines, and of a central position amidst his

foes, would be able to detach troops from the besieging armies to send them to every point menaced in the external zone, and to defeat in detail the provincial levies. The mistake of the original advance on Paris, which, we have said, had been largely averted by the unexpected surrender of Metz, had by this time been almost wholly corrected, owing in part to Moltke's unbending constancy, in part to the misdirected efforts of France, chiefly, perhaps, to the gigantic onset of Germany, and he could look forward to the result hopefully. The prospect, in truth, had become dark for France, but a light suddenly shone out at one point of the scene, to the discomfiture of her astounded foes, and this revealed to the world a great captain, showed how prodigious was yet her essential strength, illustrated admirable feats of her arms, and proved the issue of the strife to be still uncertain.

Chanzy had, we have seen, fallen back to the left during the disastrous retreat of D'Aurelle on Orleans. He had endeavoured in vain to join his colleague, and on the 5th of December he was in positions considerably to the south-west of the city, on a line between Beaugency on the Loire and Josnes. He was here informed that the Army of the Loire had been divided into two great parts, the one composed of the centre and right, entrusted, we have said before, to Bourbaki, and the second, the 16th and 17th corps, placed under his command as General-in-Chief, and he found himself unexpectedly reinforced to an extent that might have been deemed impos-

sible. With characteristic energy and resource Gambetta had moved the best divisions of the Army of the West, called the 21st corps, to the aid of Chanzy, and had pushed forward a strong detachment from Tours, and the chief of the new Second Army of the Loire, owing to this extraordinary and well-concealed effort, was at the head of 80,000 or 90,000 men. These troops, however, for the most part, were mere levies; and the 16th corps, the soldiers of Coulmiers and Loigny, had suffered such losses, and had been so weakened, that a fragment only of it could remain in the field. The army, however, had good artillery, obtained by Gambetta from abroad; its far-reaching small-arms could be made most destructive in a region of plains; some excellent officers were in its ranks, notably Jauréguibbery, a distinguished seaman, and, above all, it was in the hands of a commander of most remarkable powers. Chanzy resolved to make head against the enemy, and to defend, where he stood, the valley of the Loire; and with this object he chose a strong position, extending from the Forest of Marchenoir on his left, to Meung and Beaugency on the extreme right, and covered in front by many villages, affording excellent points for defence. Behind this line, difficult to turn on the flanks, bristling with obstacles to a direct attack, and giving spaces for offensive returns, Chanzy drew up his army of recruits, and sternly awaited the German onslaught.

At this juncture the Grand Duke and his army, from 30,000 to 40,000 strong, were approaching

Meung, on the northern bank of the Loire; and of the three corps of the Second Army, one was around Gien observing Bourbaki, another was holding Orleans and the adjoining tract, and the last was marching down the southern bank of the Loire, divided from the Grand Duke by the river. The German leaders were not aware that Chanzy and his army were at hand, and had no idea that he had received a reinforcement, great in numbers, at least; and they had placed their forces on either side of the Loire in order easily to pounce on Tours, and to crush, in its seat, the Republican Government. Their boastful hopes were rudely dispelled, and an astonishing passage of arms was witnessed. On the 6th of December a slight encounter took place between an advanced guard of the Grand Duke and a detachment of Chanzy near Meung, and as the French were, on the whole, beaten, the Germans pressed forward with increased confidence. The result was very different when they had come before the admirably chosen positions of their foes. A desperate contest raged for four days; the Grand Duke searched every part of Chanzy's line, and assailed it in front and on both flanks, but he not only failed to overwhelm his enemy, but was compelled to seek the assistance of the corps at Orleans, and of the corps on the opposite side of the Loire; and his army lost many thousands of men, while some of his divisions were cut to pieces.[1] At the

[1] The German account of these battles, "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 47, 63, is quite inadequate, and far from candid.

GENERAL CHANZY.

From photograph by F. Etienne Cariat, Paris.

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close of this extraordinary struggle the right wing of Chanzy had lost some ground, owing chiefly to a surprise by night, but the centre and left wing had scarcely fallen back; and though his young levies had cruelly suffered, they had successfully kept their well-trained adversaries in check. Had the German chiefs had the least notion of Chanzy's position and of the strength of his army, they would never have divided their forces on the Loire, perhaps would not have attacked at all; and they were baffled in this fierce and protracted conflict.[1] Yet the success

The writer, indeed, does not deny the losses of the Grand Duke, but he asserts that the French had "a fourfold superiority of strength." This calculation can only be arrived at by suppressing the facts that the 9th Prussian corps, on the southern bank of the Loire, assisted the Grand Duke by keeping a large French division in check, and that two divisions of Chanzy's 16th corps were not engaged at all. The French could hardly have been much more than double the number of the Germans, unless the Grand Duke had suffered more losses before these days than has ever been suspected.

[1] How well contested and terrible these battles were has been attested by many eye-witnesses, especially by a correspondent of the *Times*, writing with German sympathies from the German camp. One passage from Chanzy's most valuable work, "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," p. 447, will suffice here: "Pendant les rudes journées de Josnés, un officier supérieur allemand fait prisonnier, ne dissimulait rien de l'étonnement que lui causait la résistance de nos jeunes troupes, comparait ces batailles de la Beauce à celles de 1866 auxquelles il avait pris part, et avouait que ces dernières n'étaient qu'un jeu d'enfants auprès de ces luttes acharnées et incessantes qu'il lui fallait de nouveau soutenir pour réduire un pays qu'ils croyaient à bout de ses ressources après ses désastres. C'est là le plus bel éloge de ces armées nouvelles que la volonté et le patriotisme de la France ont fait surgir."

of Chanzy—for success it was—was less due to the errors of his foes than to the admirable dispositions he had made on the field. His strategy and tactics had alike been excellent, and worthy of a captain of a very high order. He had placed his army of levies on ground where the Germans could not obtain the full advantage caused by superior power of manœuvre, and he had really forced the Grand Duke to attack in front, exposed to the deadly fire of rifled guns and small-arms. He had also made repeatedly counter attacks, essential for an effective defence, and he had shown a skill in combining the three arms and making their united power felt, not shown by other French generals in the war. But above all, he had inspired his lieutenants and their men with his own indomitable and heroic spirit; and the sensitive and gallant French nature felt at once the influence of a true leader, and, under its spell, made noble efforts. The result of these battles is more than sufficient proof of what the Army of the Loire might have done had it been committed from the first to Chanzy's hands, nay, had it not been exposed to defeat and ruin by Gambetta's reckless and hasty meddling.

The French Army, though in high heart,[1] could

[1] Chanzy thus describes the attitude of his troops at the end of this series of battles: "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," p. 150: "L'ardeur des troupes était telle qu'à diverse reprises, pendant l'action, le général-en-chef avait dû donner l'ordre aux divisions de ne pas se laisser entraîner trop loin, tout mouvement de l'armée en dehors de ses positions étant imprudent et inutile."

no longer bear the incessant strain on it, especially as the enemy was being daily reinforced. Chanzy most wisely resolved to fall back; his operations showed the greatest skill and insight. The relief of Paris was ever present to his mind, as the most pressing task of the provincial armies; and he decided on retreating to the Loir, and even to the Sarthe, where he could rally the levies of the west and north, would be almost as near the capital as he had been when on the Loire, and would threaten the most assailable front of the lines of the siege. The strategic conception was the best possible; but how was he to draw off his untrained army, through the broad and open plains of the Beauce, in the presence of adversaries given the power they would acquire through the retrograde movement? Chanzy effected his purpose with most striking forethought, fertility of resource, and constancy. His first care was to make a feigned attack on an exposed point of the German line; and his antagonists were so wholly deceived, that they prepared themselves for a defensive stand. Having thus concealed his real intentions, he sent a detachment to secure the passages of the Loir; and masking the chosen line of his retreat, by placing numerous irregulars in the Forest of Marchenoir, especially in its northern outskirts, he fell back through the great plain that extends between the Forest and the course of the Loire. These, however, were only part of the means he employed to perplex and threaten his foes, and to make the retrograde march safe.

The German corps on the southern bank of the Loire was moving down the river, and menacing Blois; two of the divisions of the 16th corps, which had not taken part in the late battles, were at Mer and Blois on the northern bank; and Chanzy directed the commander of one of these to hold Blois to the last extremity; and if the enemy should force the passage, to retreat further down the river to Amboise, and to withdraw attention from the main army. At the same time he sent repeated messages, entreating Bourbaki to make an effort to attack the corps on the southern bank; and thus he not only screened his projected movement, but sought to have a diversion made on the rear of the Germans, and perhaps to place them in grave danger.

These admirable moves completely succeeded; and Chanzy made good his way to the Loir, and occupied the two points of Frétéval and Vendôme, almost unmolested by the hostile armies. The Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles, indeed, lost sight of the French for nearly two days; and they then pursued, in the wrong direction, not following Chanzy's line of retreat, but making circuitous movements on Frétéval and Vendôme. The German corps, no doubt, on the southern bank of the Loire, contrived to effect the passage at Blois, and thus to join its supports late; and Bourbaki's army was not in a state to make a demonstration in its rear;[1] but at every other point of the field of

[1] Bourbaki had not Chanzy's capacity and resource, and the chief of the Imperial Guard naturally had no confidence in mere

manœuvre, the German leaders had been outgeneralled. Prince Frederick Charles, when made aware at last of the position taken by Chanzy on the Loir, resolved, if possible, to destroy his adversary; he had already summoned his only remaining corps from Gien and Orleans to join in the contest; and he attacked Chanzy at Vendôme on the 15th of December, hoping in a day or two to crush him with his whole united forces. The battle was indecisive, but the French lost ground; and Chanzy with perfect judgment fell back on the Sarthe, and spread his wearied army in camps round Le Mans, a strategic point of the first importance. By this time, the German corps in the rear had come up; but the German commanders did not pursue; the Grand Duke had ere long retired on his former positions around Chartres; the Prince fell back on the tract near Orleans, and only a single corps of the Second Army was left beyond the Loir to observe Chanzy. That indefatigable chief was soon in the field again, sending out flying columns to hold his enemy in check; and one of these was engaged, not without success, with a hostile detachment near Vendôme.

These operations of Chanzy form a striking episode in the drama of the war of 1870-1. His retreat on the Loir and the Sarthe, a more remarkable feat

levies. But he was a gallant and loyal, if afterwards a most unfortunate, soldier, and his army was not at this moment fit to move. See a remarkable letter by Gambetta, "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," p. 517.

than the retreat of Moreau through the Black Forest, was really a great strategic movement, successful in the main objects aimed at; and equal to one of the fine marches of Turenne. In the first contest he had baffled his confident foes, who had attacked him with forces unwisely divided; he had outmanœuvred them as he fell back on Vendôme and Le Mans; he had carried out his original design, had drawn near his supports in the west and the north, and stood menacing the investing circle round Paris;[1] he had inflicted immense injury on the German armies; and he had done these great things with an assemblage of levies, not a fourth part of them being trained soldiers. The nature of the situation, in fact, created by him, was made evident[2] in the alarm which prevailed at Versailles, where it was thought that, impregnable as it had appeared, the external zone might be even now broken; but it was best proved by the operations of the Germans themselves. At the intelligence of the fierce struggle with Chanzy, Moltke had urged the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles not to press forward too far towards the west, and especially to keep an eye on Bourbaki, who might slip past them, and march on the capital. The pursuit of Chanzy, therefore, was soon given up;

[1] See the very intelligent reports of a correspondent of the *Times*, quoted by Chanzy, "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," pp. 522, 525.

[2] See a number of reports quoted by Chanzy in the same work, pp. 526-7.

and a mere demonstration made by Bourbaki, in the hope of assisting his hard-pressed colleague, had caused the German commanders to fall back, the one towards Chartres, the other on Orleans. These operations, however, were timid in the extreme; and had the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles been able at this juncture to keep the field, assuredly Moltke would have spared no effort, to strike down the still invincible foe, who had really discomfited his perplexed lieutenants. But the forces of the invaders had been half destroyed, in the late bloody and exhausting contest; the Bavarians alone, it has been asserted, were reduced to 5000 or 6000 men; and the Germans were so broken down, in heart and courage, that it had become necessary to give them repose. In fact, but for the large reinforcements which fortunately had been provided for them, these divisions of the great conquering host would, perhaps, have been unable to fight again; and had Bourbaki, at this moment, possessed the means of making a great offensive movement, the Germans in the south would have been in the gravest peril. The great commander, in a word, who had suddenly appeared, had, imperfect as his resources had been, very nearly changed the position of affairs.[1]

[1] "The Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. pp. 39, 97, contains a very meagre and deceptive account of Chanzy's operations. It cannot, however, altogether conceal the discomfiture of the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles, and the great losses sustained by their armies. It should be confronted at every point by

Chanzy had established his army firmly at Le Mans, as 1870 was about to close. Meanwhile operations, not without interest, had taken place on the theatre of war in the north. After the indecisive battle near Amiens, the invaders, we have seen, had overrun Normandy; and having occupied Rouen, and other towns, were menacing even the great port of Havre. But Gambetta had added another corps, the 23rd, to the 22nd in the north, and had placed at their head the ablest chief after Chanzy, seen on the side of France; and Faidherbe had made the Army of the North capable of appear-

Chanzy's narrative, "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," pp. 101, 222; and by General Derrécagaix's excellent epitome, "La Guerre Moderne," vol. ii. pp. 444, 465. For the real state of the situation after the retreat to Le Mans, see Chanzy, p. 222. I quote the following striking passage: "La deuxième armée venait encore d'opérer une retraite tout aussi difficile que les précédentes et qui, comme elles, lui fait honneur. L'ennemi, contenu partout, était devenu de moins en moins entreprenant; il était facile de voir que, pas plus que les nôtres ses troupes n'avaient pu résister à la fatigue; ses hommes étaient, eux aussi, grandement demoralisés par cette persistance d'une lutte qui se reproduisait constamment, alors qu'ils la croyaient terminée: le desordre se mettait parfois dans ses colonnes, malgré sa solide organisation et sa discipline. Un officier d'ordonnance du général-en-chef égaré dans le brouillard en portant un ordre, avait trouvé les convois allemands dans la plus grande confusion dans les ravins d'Azay, et les troupes qui les escortaient complètement débandées; les mêmes renseignements étaient donné par les gens du pays. Il y avait dans ces circonstances les chances d'un succés certain, si nous avions eu alors, sur nos derrières, quelques troupes fraîches, et une reserve solidement organisée, ou bien s'il eût été possible au général Bourbaki de faire une diversion qui eût maintenu sur la Loire une partie des corps avec lesquels le prince Frédéric Charles s'acharnait contre la deuxième armée."

ing in the field towards the end of December. Advancing from the great fortress of Lille, he pushed forward to the line of the Somme, in order to reach the flank of the German invasion; and this skilful movement compelled the enemy to evacuate part of Normandy, and even Amiens. Manteuffel, now the leader of the First Army, marched rapidly to strike his adversary down, but Faidherbe had chosen a very strong position behind the Hallue, an affluent of the Somme; and the battle that followed did high honour to the hastily organized levies of the French. The Germans[1] tried to turn the right of Faidherbe, as at Gravelotte, by an out-flanking movement, and fell in force on his well-protected centre, but both attacks were without success, and the French army retained its positions. The essential difference, however, between troops inured to

[1] The "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. p. 110, asserts that Faidherbe's army consisted of "some 43,000 men and eighty-two guns." It was composed of three divisions only; and Général Derrécagaix, "La Gurre Moderne," vol. ii. p. 389, after a careful calculation, estimates the force of the Germans at 28,000 men and 108 guns, and that of the French at 35,000 men and sixty-six guns. This excellent writer and critic thus clearly indicates one of the chief distinctions between an army of recruits and of trained soldiers:—"Même avec les armes modernes, des soldats improvisés animés du sentiment de devoir, enflammés par l'amour de la patrie, peuvent résister à de vielles troupes, quand ils ont pour chefs des officiers de valeur et pour théâtre de leurs efforts un terrain de combat favorable. Mais pour dépasser ce but, pour prendre l'offensive et obtenir des succès decisifs, il faut, on le voit, des soldats exercés, une organisation solide, une cohésion, et une discipline que les armées longuement préparées peuvent seules posséder."

war, and mere young soldiers, convinced Faidherbe that he had not the power to resist the enemy's second effort; and he fell back behind the strongholds of the north. He had not contemplated an attempt to relieve Paris, and he had probably accomplished all that he had hoped; Normandy was for the present freed to some extent from the enemy. But he had abandoned the offensive, and was compelled to retreat, and Moltke's great object had been secured; the external zone shielding the Army of the Meuse, on the northern front of the siege, had not been even shaken.

We turn to Paris, the chief centre of the intermittent but gigantic struggle, now raging from the Vosges, and the Jura, along the Loire to the verge of Brittany. After his retreat behind the Marne on the 3rd December, Ducrot had intended to renew the contest within two or three days at most, in order to support the Army of the Loire, supposed to be on its way to the capital. A letter from Moltke, however, informing Trochu of the complete defeat of D'Aurelle, at Orleans, prevented an attempt to renew the sortie; and a fortnight was devoted to the necessary task of restoring the Second Army of Paris, shattered frightfully, we have seen, in the contest on the Marne. Preparations were completed in the third week of December, for another great effort against the German lines; and on this occasion the northern front of the investing circle was the chief point of attack, probably because Faidherbe and the Army of the North were known to be only a few marches

distant. The sortie was made at daybreak on the 21st, on as vast a scale as that of November; a formidable attack on the plain of St. Denis, and thence on Bondy, and towards the line of the Marne, was combined with demonstrations against the lines to the west; but it failed, after a brief struggle, and it became evident that the besiegers' zone was not to be broken by mere assaults, and that the Parisian levies were losing their former confidence. Vinoy, indeed, covering his troops by the fire of numerous batteries placed on the hill of Avron, captured two or three outposts to the north-east; and Ducrot gained some partial success in an advance between Drancy and the Wood of Bondy. But the main attack,[1] conducted by Roncière de Noury, a distinguished chief of the French Navy, was repelled with little difficulty by the Prussian Guard; the onset of the French broke in fragments against Le Bourget, a strongly fortified village, and though Roncière was not sustained on his right, there is no reason to believe that, in any event, the issue of the conflict would have been different. The Parisian armies fell back at all points, suffering again severely from cold and hardship; but their losses in the field had not been great, an indication that their courage had flagged; and there are grounds for an opinion expressed by Ducrot, that the Germans had been informed beforehand of the projected sortie through their numerous spies.

[1] The armour-clad waggons seem to have done good service with their guns on this occasion.

The easy discomfiture of this effort provoked irritation and anger in Paris. The Government, sprung from revolution itself, was little able to quell revolutionary clamour, and exhibited alarming signs of weakness. The Ministry, too, was divided in mind; a minority, supported in this by Ducrot, saw in Moltke's letter a pacific overture, and thought that the time to treat had come; but the majority including Trochu, and led by Gambetta,—who though absent, bowed his colleagues to his will—insisted on prolonging the struggle. The reins of power were held with increasing slackness; and this was not only injurious to the defence, but strengthened the evil and noxious elements abounding at all times in the capital of France. Vile demagogues eager to gain cheaply applause for themselves, by appeals to the multitude, denounced the Government as false and worthless; a Press, valiant on paper, echoed their cries; noisy clubs of Jacobins pronounced for a rising; the hideous figures, which, before long, were to become the infamous leaders of the Commune, began to make their influence felt; and faction and disorder raged in parts of the city.[1] The attitude, nevertheless, of Paris, as a whole, continued to be, as it had been from the first, undaunted, patient, calm, and heroic. The work of the defence went steadily on; arrangements were made for another great sortie, and no signs of yield-

[1] For all these details see Ducrot's "La Defense de Paris," vol. iii. pp. 189, 232.

ing appeared, though the bombardment, it was known, was at hand, and the batteries of Avron were soon to be destroyed by siege guns brought up by the Germans after Vinoy's late ineffectual effort. The citizens, unawed, still sternly held out; and this, though the sufferings of all classes had already become intense, nay terrible. The mass of the population had been placed on rations, and had no sustenance but a worthless compound that scarcely deserved the name of bread. Domestic animals and the vermin of the sewer had for weeks been eagerly consumed for food; and the spectre of famine was even now visible. The death-rate was increasing with frightful speed; the mortality of the young had become appalling, and the gay, animated, and resplendent city wore the aspect of a plague-stricken space, cut off from the world, left in outer darkness, and frozen by the cold of an Arctic winter, for light and fire had almost vanished. Yet the population which, two centuries before, had defied Condé and Anne of Austria in their boasts that Paris could not do without the delicacy of the "bread of Gonesse," proved that its courage had not declined, and still kept more formidable enemies at bay.[1]

[1] Ducrot was an Imperialist and had no sympathy with the population of Paris; but he describes its conduct in this language: "La Defense de Paris," vol. iii. p. 217:—"A part le groupe des factieux, des revolutionnaires, qu'il ne peut jamais compter quand il s'agit de devoir, de sacrifice, a part cette populace sans nom, sans foi, sans patrie, écume cosmopolite qui salit toutes les grandes

Moltke had not made his influence felt decisively, in the field, in this passage of the war. He had left his lieutenants to do their work in the provinces, and had only interposed in a single instance, with the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles. But, confining himself to the great labour of the siege, and of the operations depending on it, he had so strengthened the double zone around Paris, and far beyond in France, that he might expect success in the near future. He had continued to make the best use of the huge reinforcements ever coming in; and he had largely increased of late the armies in the field, enormously reduced by the never-ending contest. His grasp was even now on the throat of the capital, for its power of resistance was visibly on the wane; and while he could defy all that the besieged could do, he could always array imposing forces against the provincial armies,

villes, on peut dire qu'à Paris toutes les classes, riches ou pauvres, tous les ages, jeunes ou vieux, rivalisèrent d'ardeur, de dévouement. Chacun mettant de côté et ses affections et ses espérances, ne songea qu'au pays menacé; devant la Patrie en péril, il n'y eut plus qu'un grand parti, celui de la Patrie." M. Viollet Le Duc is equally a trustworthy witness from an opposite point of view in politics: "Mémoire sur la Defense de Paris," p. 32: "Oui l'attitude de la population de Paris est faite pour toucher profondément les âmes vraiment françaises. A part quelques échauffourées ridicules autant qu'odieuses, et trop bien annoncées par l'ennemi pour n'êtes pas un peu son ouvrage, cette population, signalée dans le monde comme futile, légère, toute à son bien être et egoïste et toute a ses plaisirs, a donné un example, peut-être unique dans l'histoire, de constance, de fermeté, d'abnégation, et de charité délicate."

spread as these were on a vast circumference of which he held the centre. He could now easily send detachments from the besieging circle to the external zone; and he had, besides, this immense advantage: he could flash his orders to all parts of France from the Rhine to the Loire, and thence to the Seine, while the communication between Paris and all her armies of relief was tardy and precarious in the extreme. The balance was turning against France, and the invasion, at first a broken current, had become a destructive and far-spreading flood. Her exertions, however, were still worthy of her; the patriotic movement was as strong as ever; Gambetta still created new armies; Faidherbe remained unconquered in the north; the illustrious Chanzy had reduced two hostile armies to impotence for a time, and was menacing the besiegers' lines; Bourbaki, Garibaldi and Cremer were in the field; and armed levies were on foot in still growing multitudes. Strong as it was, the external zone might yet yield to well applied pressure; so long as the invaders were kept around Paris their position could not be deemed safe, nor would the fall of the capital necessarily lead to the defeat and the subjugation of France. If, at this supreme moment, her armed strength were ably directed and husbanded with care, the ultimate issue of the gigantic strife of infuriated races was still far from certain.

CHAPTER X.

Retrospect of the military situation since Sedan—Position of affairs on the theatre of war at the end of 1870—What the operations of the French ought to have been—Wise views of Chanzy—Gambetta directs Bourbaki and the First Army of the Loire towards the east—Reckless imprudence of this strategy in existing circumstances—The Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles advance against Chanzy and the Second Army of the Loire—Skilful operations of Chanzy—Battle of Le Mans—The Germans held in check all day—The capture of one point in the line of defence at night compels Chanzy to retreat—He falls back on Laval and reorganizes his troops—Campaign in the north—Faidherbe successful at Bapaume—He moves on St. Quentin, and retreats after an indecisive battle—Campaign in the east—Bad condition of Bourbaki's army—He advances against Werder, and is successful at Villersexel—He loses a great opportunity, chiefly owing to the state of his troops—Werder retreats behind the Lisaine.—Battles of Héricourt, and retreat of Bourbaki—Paris isolated—The external zone of the Germans intact—Bombardment of the forts and the enceinte of Paris—The city bombarded—Complete failure of the attack—Sortie of the 19th January—It fails—Sufferings of the population of Paris—Its heroic attitude—The armistice—Bourbaki's army excepted—Views of Chanzy in the event of hostilities being resumed—His masterly arrangements and unshaken constancy—Advance of Manteuffel and the German Army of the South against Bourbaki—Skill of Moltke in directing this operation—Bourbaki tries to commit suicide—Catastrophe of his army, chiefly owing to a misunderstanding as to the armistice—It is forced to cross

the frontier of France, and to retreat into Switzerland—Fall of Belfort and other French fortresses—Chanzy is still for war—The Assembly at Bordeaux pronounces for peace—The Treaty of Frankfort—Part taken by Moltke in the conditions imposed on France—Reflections on the war, with special references to events after Sedan.

THE end of December was now at hand; we may rapidly glance back at the course of the struggle—colossal, and still of varying fortunes—which had raged in France since the catastrophe of Sedan. Moltke had marched on Paris with a comparatively small force, leaving his communications almost closed, and—not to speak of Bazaine and his army—with a series of fortresses in his rear; and he had taken this step because he believed, in common with all in the German camp, that France and her capital would not dare to resist. Like Diebitsch, praised in his "Letters on the East," he had pressed boldly forward to bring the war to a close, but unlike Diebitsch, Moltke had to deal, not with the effete Turk, but with the French people. Paris had shut her gates, and France rose to arms. The invaders, bound to the investing circle they had drawn round the defiant city, were for months exposed to the incessant attacks of levies formidable in numbers and power; the Germans were placed in grave peril, and their operations, which had been a succession of triumphs, became for a time feeble, uncertain, tentative. Moltke had emerged safe from this sea of troubles partly because Metz had fallen before its time, partly because Gambetta, with

extreme unwisdom, had misdirected the arms of France, but chiefly, perhaps, because the whole German nation had passionately joined in a war of races, and had made gigantic efforts to support its armies.

But if Moltke had been mistaken in the first instance, his firmness, his energy, his clear insight, had done much to incline the balance of fortune, as the strife progressed, to the side of Germany. He had taken the true course for reducing Paris; he had written, indeed, thirty years before, that "Towns of half a million of men do not fall by force of arms,"[1] and dangerous as the situation had been, he could almost count on the fall of the city. Meanwhile, with steadfast aim and unchanging purpose, he had devoted himself to the two-fold task of making his communications with the Rhine secure, and opening a broad way for the invasion, and of so strengthening the external zone he had thrown from the first around the besiegers, that it would be able to resist the French in the field; and in this he had at last succeeded, having made the best use of the huge reinforcements placed unreservedly in his hands by Germany. By this time many of the fortresses in their way had fallen; the German armies occupied France from the Saone and the Loire to the Oise and the Somme; thrown on the defensive during the first months of the siege, they could now generally take a bold offensive, and Moltke, fortunately given an un-

[1] The Russians in Bulgaria and Rumelia, p. 435.

divided command, was at last able to make their immense power felt. He could with safety send detachments from Paris, to add to the force of the external zone, for the strength of the besieged was failing; he could direct the invading armies, at a moment's notice, from a central position, and on interior lines, against enemies scattered along a huge circle, and scarcely able to transmit a message to Paris; and these conditions, as we have already pointed out, gave him a great, if not a decisive advantage in the final contest about to begin. Moltke, in a word, had been like a mariner, whose craft, struck by a sudden gust of wind, had been nearly thrown on its beam ends, but who, having averted shipwreck by courage and skill, could now look forward to a prosperous voyage.

If we turn to France, her complete prostration after Sedan had seemed to invite the Germans to dictate peace in the midst of the capital. But Paris and the nation had sprung to arms, and the vast elements of military power in France, combined and arrayed by Gambetta's genius, had been suddenly formed into huge levies, which had checked and imperilled the amazed conquerors. The besieged city held the invaders to the spot, and the waves of an immense and universal rising, gathered in on all sides, on the German hosts, and more than once seemed about to engulph them. The premature surrender of Metz, however, had removed many of the dangers at hand; the Army of the Loire, which could have done great things, had been recklessly

wasted in the field; the vigorous sortie of Ducrot had failed, and after these reverses the provincial armies had, on the whole, been undoubtedly worsted, and Paris, which, in any event, would have to yield to famine, if not relieved, was exhibiting signs of increasing weakness. The military situation had become of evil omen for France, and the position of the armies in Paris, and of the armies outside, was, as we have pointed out, unfavourable in the extreme. The prospect, nevertheless, was by no means desperate, if the prodigious resources of the nation for war were even now employed with real skill and judgment. So long as Paris continued to hold out, the invaders were more or less insecure; Moltke's external zone might even yet be broken, exposed as it was to far spreading attacks, and, in that event, the result would bode ill for them. Nor was France vanquished, though Paris should yield; half of her territory was not yet occupied, and the national rising had been so powerful that it might yet weary the Germans out, if conducted on a wise defensive system. France, too, had still large armies in the field; Chanzy had done wonders with his young levies; Faidherbe was by no means a contemptible foe; Gambetta had added[1] four new corps to those he had already raised, and behind them was an inexhaustible supply of armed men, eager to fight for their country. Opinion in Europe, even at this great crisis, refused to predict the course of fast-

[1] The 19th, 24th, 25th and 26th corps.

coming events, as can be seen by referring to the Press of the day.

A few words will describe the positions of the belligerents on the theatre of war. Swelled by reinforcements, of which the estimate has varied from half a million to 300,000 men,[1] the Germans in France were fully 800,000 strong, this immense total including a mass of non-combatants. The besiegers of Paris had been reduced from some 250,000 to 200,000 men, and the rest of the vast invading host was divided into garrisons of the captured fortresses, troops holding the communications to the east, and the armies actively engaged in the field. The Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles were, the one at Chartres, the other at Orleans, having received large additions to their

[1] The "Prussian Staff History" scarcely alludes to these reinforcements; the writer, no doubt, wishes to keep out of sight the tremendous strain put on the resources of Germany, and does not like to admit how much a half-despotic military monarchy owed to a great national movement. In an appendix, indeed, vol. v. p. 106, a statement is introduced to the effect that the reinforcements sent to the German army, from the beginning of the war to March, 1871, were about 240,000 men; but this seems to include only troops sent to the armies round Paris and in the field, and not to refer to the troops that covered the communications and held the fortresses of France. This estimate, it may be affirmed, falls far short of the truth, as ascertained by many authorities. A correspondent of the *Times* wrote these significant words at this juncture; they tell more than carefully-arranged statistics: "That the whole country (of Germany) is being fast drained of its able-bodied male population is becoming terribly evident. The contrast since my visit in October is very striking. The number of men in the prime of life seems fearfully diminished."

shattered forces, and they were observing Chanzy and Bourbaki alike, each supposed to be trying to march to the relief of the capital. To the north Manteuffel was watching Faidherbe, and sending detachments to overrun Normandy; and Werder, with an army ever on the increase, was occupying Burgundy and Franche Comté, and endeavouring to hasten the siege of Belfort, which was making a most stubborn defence. At the south-eastern part of the external zone Moltke had raised a new barrier against the enemy; he had brought back to Paris the 1st Bavarian corps, almost ruined by the efforts of Chanzy, but he was despatching from the siege the 2nd corps, to give support to the 7th, which, we have seen, was extended upon a long line connecting Prince Frederick Charles with Werder.

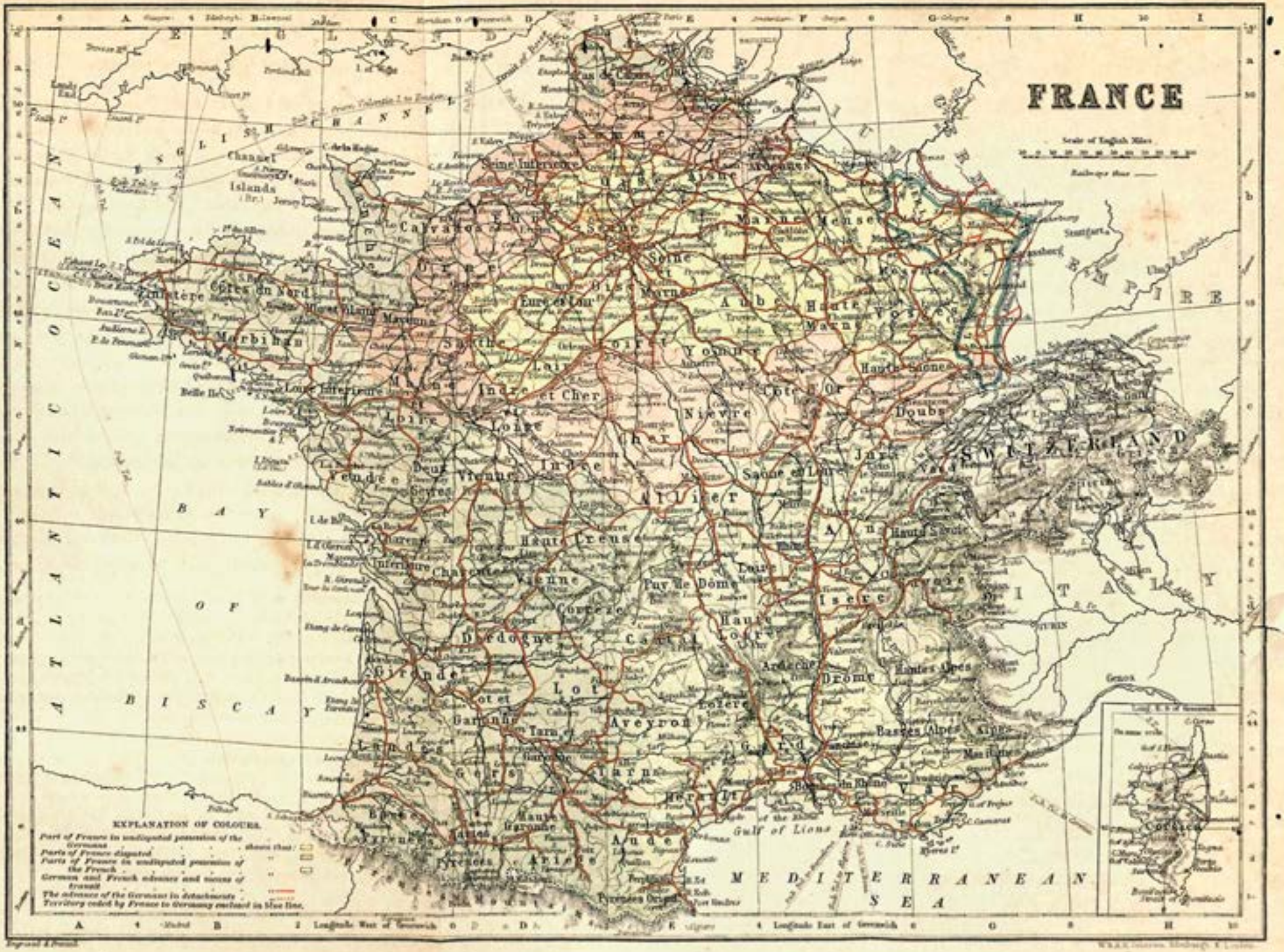
On the French side, the armies in Paris had been greatly reduced in numbers—100,000 men had probably disappeared—and the fighting power of the city, we have said, was failing, while a month would see the end of the store of provisions. As for the provincial armies, Chanzy was at Le Mans, his troops not reinforced as fully as he had hoped; Bourbaki had, in some measure, restored his army, now given the name of the First Army of the Loire, and both commanders were in positions that enabled them to try to advance on Paris by a direct and well-combined movement. For the rest, Faidherbe was threatening the enemy on the Somme; a large array of levies was filling the region between the Lower Seine, the Eure, and the Mayenne; Garibaldi and

Cremer were still opposing Werder; and a new army, which had been formed in the south, was on the way from Provence to Franche Comté. Notwithstanding her losses, France had still at least a million of men in arms, and these prodigious numbers were yet growing. These improvised forces, however, we need scarcely repeat, were not trained or well-organized soldiers; they were ill-furnished with many kinds of appliances needed for great movements, and, as it was now the depth of a severe winter, they were especially unfit for operations that required celerity, endurance, and power of manœuvre.

In these circumstances common sense pointed out the course of operations for the arms of France. An attempt to relieve Paris was the necessity of the hour, for the city could not hold out much longer, and this could be accomplished only by an immediate advance of the provincial armies on the beleaguered capital. As the effort, too, would not improbably fail, it was absolutely essential, with a view to the defence of France in the near future, that the armies of relief should run as little risk as possible, and should possess lines of retreat open, in order to maintain and prolong the contest. All this was perfectly seen by Chanzy, the one commander on the side of France who gave proof of real strategic insight, and was an adversary fit to cope with Moltke; and, at this juncture, he entreated Gambetta—in despatches which should be carefully studied—to give direction to the conduct of

the war, which alone promised success or safety. He clearly perceived the prodigious value of Moltke's central position and interior lines, and the facilities they gave the German commander to keep his hold on the Parisian forces, and to defeat the armies outside in detail, and he did justice to the skill and resource of his enemy. But, like a true soldier, he had not ceased to hope, and he thought that victory might yet be plucked from danger. A concentric march of all the provincial levies from their present positions on the besiegers' lines, combined with determined sorties from Paris, might yet, he believed, cause the siege to be raised, nay, lead to a reverse for the German arms, and, in any event, an operation of the kind would enable the French to fall back and renew hostilities in the still intact provinces. He proposed, therefore, that, at a given time, he should advance from Le Mans to the Seine; that Bourbaki, from the Loire, should make a corresponding movement; that Faidherbe should press forward from across the Somme; that armed levies should march in second line; and that, when the occasion had come, the armies in Paris should make desperate efforts to join in the attacks of all the armies uniting from without, and thus endeavour to force the zone of investment. Were this once effected, the Germans around Paris would obviously be placed in the gravest peril.[1]

[1] Chanzy's views will be found in "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," pp. 234, 254. We have only space for a few words: "Disposé comme il l'est l'ennemi cherche évidemment a se pré-


FRANCE
Scale of English Miles
Railways thus
EXPLANATION OF COLOURS.
Part of France in undisputed possession of the Germans shown thus
Parts of France disputed
Parts of France in undisputed possession of the French
German and French advance and success of transit
The advance of the Germans in detachments
Territory ceded by France to Germany enclosed in blue line.
ENGLISH CHANNEL
ATLANTIC OCEAN
BAY OF BISCAY
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Gulf of Lions
SWITZERLAND
ITALY
GERMAN EMPIRE
Channel Islands
Seine Inférieure
Somme
Aisne
Ardennes
Marne
Meuse
Calvados
Orne
Seine et Oise
Eure et Loir
Oise
Aube
Haute Marne
Vosges
Finistère
Côtes du Nord
Ille et Vilaine
Mayenne
Manche
Morbihan
Sarthe
Loir et Cher
Loiret
Yonne
Haute Saône
Loire Inférieure
Maine et Loire
Indre et Loire
Loire
Nièvre
Côte d'Or
Doubs
Vendée
Deux Sèvres
Vienne
Cher
Indre
Saône et Loire
Jura
Allier
Haute Savoie
Haute Vienne
Creuse
Corrèze
Puy de Dôme
Isère
Charente Inférieure
Charente
Dordogne
Cantal
Haute Loire
Ardèche
Hautes Alpes
Gironde
Lot
Drôme
Basses Alpes
Lot et Garonne
Aveyron
Lozère
Var
Landes
Tarn
Gard
Gers
Tarn et Garonne
Hérault
Bouches du Rhône
Basses Pyrénées
Haute Garonne
Aude
Hautes Pyrénées
Ariège
Pyrénées Orientales
Corsica
Genoa
Turin

This project of Chanzy was, from every point of view, the best that could be formed as affairs stood; even if it had failed, as we think would have happened, it was not hopeless, and it was at least safe, and it was the one that Moltke expected and feared.[1] Most unhappily for France, Gambetta had lent an ear to the counsels of a theorist ignorant of war, and had already committed himself to a grand scheme of operations on an imposing scale, in which his fervid imagination beheld a glorious prospect. He had been forcibly impressed by the success with which he had recently moved large masses from the Saone to the Loire, and had unquestionably surprised the German commanders; he had organized, we have seen, a new force in the South, which had been named the 24th corps; he had called into being the 25th, near the Loire; and opinion in France was eager for the relief of Belfort, defended, we have said, heroically for months, and for a

senter successivement, et en forces, devant chacune de nos armées; il manœuvre très habilement. . . . Nos trois principales armées une fois sur les positions indiquées, se mettre en communication avec Paris et combiner dès-lors leurs efforts de chaque jour pour se rapprocher de l'objectif commun avec des sorties vigoureuses de l'armée de Paris, de façon a obliger les troupes ennemis d'investissement à se maintenir tout entières dans leurs lignes. Le résultat sera dès-lors dans le succès d'une des attaques extérieures, et si ce succès est obtenu, si l'investissement peut-être rompu sur un point un ravittaillement de Paris peut devenir possible, l'ennemi peut-être refoulé et contraint d'abandonner une partie de ses lignes et de nouveaux efforts combinés entre les armées de l'extérieur et de l'intérieur, peuvent dans la lutte suprême aboutir à la délivrance."

[1] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. p. 143; "The Franco-German War," vol. ii. pp. 87, 88, English translation.

great effort to give succour to Paris. With these facts before him, and knowing besides that Bourbaki had a large army round Bourges, and that Garibaldi and Cremer held their own in Burgundy, at the head of forces in considerable strength, Gambetta, yielding to shallow advice, thought that he possessed the means of compassing at once the various objects he had in view, and he had devised a plan which, as he conceived, would alike ensure the raising of the siege of Belfort, would compel the besiegers to draw off from Paris, and would, perhaps, cause the invasion to collapse. Fired with this vision of splendour, he had taken on himself, without consulting a single French chief, to order Bourbaki to break up from his camps, and to move, not directly on the Seine, but into Franche-Comté, far to the east; and this operation, which was to be conducted rapidly, and carefully concealed, was to be combined with a general advance of the 24th corps from Lyons and the south, and of a considerable detachment led by Cremer; these bodies uniting with Bourbaki, and joining in a decisive movement against Werder, standing alone in their path, and thence into the heart of Alsace. By these means Werder would be overpowered, attacked by an immensely larger force; the siege of Belfort would be abandoned; and Bourbaki, having seized and held the long line of the German communications with the Rhine, would force Moltke to give up the siege of Paris and to endeavour to gain contact with Germany again, and would, perhaps, obtain most

important successes. Garibaldi was to cover the great march on the left; and the 25th corps was to make demonstrations on the Loire which would probably detain Prince Frederick Charles round Orleans.

This plan of Gambetta was as ill-conceived, at least, as that which sent the Army of Châlons to its fate. A great concentric movement of the provincial armies was the only rational way to relieve Paris; this was an eccentric movement, which could hardly succeed, and which would, perhaps, lead to immense disasters. As a question of pure strategy, the direction of Bourbaki and his Army, to the east, would, almost certainly, enable Prince Frederick Charles and the Grand Duke to attack Chanzy, and to defeat him, greatly reinforced as they were; and even if Bourbaki, Cremer, and the corps from the South, should effect their junction in Franche-Comté, it would be a waste of time to attempt to raise the siege of Belfort. Nor was it obvious that Werder would be crushed; and even if all these results were attained, the occupation of Alsace, and the seizure by the French of the communications of the enemy, on that line, would not even probably force the Germans away from Paris, and make them abandon the investing circle, for they were masters of the railways and roads that led into Lorraine from the Palatinate and the Rhenish Provinces, and besides, they could obtain supplies in France, that would suffice until the fall of the city was at hand. The stroke at the communications, in a word, would be at too remote a point

to prove decisive, or even important;[1] and, on the other hand, the operation would, from first to last, be inevitably pregnant with many perils, especially if Garibaldi should not be able to throw back the forces, which might be despatched, from the external zone, on the flank and rear of Bourbaki's army as he approached Alsace. This strategy, therefore, was, even in theory, false; but the question was not one of pure strategy; it was that of the execution of an ambitious design, under existing conditions well-nigh impossible, and all but certain to prove disastrous. The means of transporting the First Army of the Loire into Franche-Comté were very imperfect; nearly all the troops to be engaged in an enterprise which, in order to have a chance of success, required soldiers inured to war, equal to forced marches, and well organized, were little more than an assemblage of recruits; the movement was to be made under an Arctic climate, in a mountainous, intricate, and barren country; and no preparations had been made beforehand to secure for the great host that was to be combined, the munitions, the food, and the other supplies absolutely necessary to enable it to march or to fight. To commit rude levies, in circumstances like these, to a task beyond their powers, and itself most dangerous, was recklessness that deserves the severest censure.[2]

[1] See on this point Hamley's "Operations of War," p. 128. Ed. 1889.

[2] Writers have been found, who have compared this project of

In the last week of December, the First Army of the Loire, the 18th and 20th corps, followed by the 15th, had set off on its march to Franche-Comté. Gambetta had all the advantage of a surprise,[1] for the German commanders, as had so often happened, had lost sight of their enemy's movements; and they thought Bourbaki was about to advance on Paris. But the difficulties of the enterprise were apparent from the first: the railways between the Loire and the Saone were inadequate to convey large masses of men; the troops had begun to suffer from cold and privations, and hundreds sank under contagious diseases; and the progress of the Army was slow in the extreme. Meanwhile, the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles had left their camps to assail Chanzy, the adversary most dangerous to the arms of Germany. Their armies were now about 90,000 strong; but—a strategic mistake which might have cost them dear—they left a large detachment to observe the Loire, being ignorant that Bourbaki was far distant; and they

Gambetta to Napoleon's magnificent conception of the Campaign of 1800. It resembled it as the fancy of a lunatic resembles the ordered imagination of Dante. Of the execution of the two plans not a word need be said: Gambetta had nothing ready; Napoleon's preparations were matured with the greatest care. For myself, when apprised of Bourbaki's fatal march, I telegraphed to the correspondent before referred to, "This will be another Sedan."

[1] Surprises, in these days of telegraphs, are probably more difficult than they were in the age of Napoleon. Gambetta, nevertheless, surprised the Germans on two and even three occasions. The "plans d'avocat" have been rightly condemned; but justice should be done to a man of real genius.

marched on Le Mans, in the first days of the new year, converging against Chanzy, with some 75,000 men, by a double movement from Chartres and Orleans. They had hoped to surprise and overwhelm their enemy; but they were disappointed in this from the outset; and another fine passage of arms was the result.

Chanzy, we have seen, had fallen back on Le Mans after the memorable stand he had made on the Loire. Le Mans is a strategic point of the greatest value, for a series of railways meets on the spot, especially from the north, the south, and the west, by which reinforcements can be easily brought up; and it affords admirable positions for defence. The French chief had led his army to the place in the hope of strengthening it greatly with new levies, and of ultimately directing it to the relief of Paris, when it had been made equal to renewed efforts. He had expected 60,000 men to join him; but these numbers had dwindled down to about 15,000, for the Army of the West was still incomplete; and the recruits, drawn for the most part from Brittany, and largely composed of peasants of La Vendée, were not inclined to leave their native province, and had traditional feelings against a French Republic. The Second Army of the Loire, however, had been made about 90,000 or even 100,000 strong; Chanzy had placed it in positions around Le Mans, which he had fortified with forethought and skill; and he stood, with the mass of his forces, on either bank of the Huisne, ready to encounter the German

attack. But he eschewed, as always, a passive defence; he had, we have said, sent flying columns, before his retreat, as far as the Loir; and these detachments now filled the tract between the Braye, the Huisne, and the Loir, in order to confront and throw back the enemy. As the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles advanced through the intricate region that extends between Nogent Le Rotru, and Vendôme, and ends, in an angle, at Le Mans, they had to fight their way through bodies of foes that held them in check, still falling back; and it became evident that they had no chance of taking their able adversary unawares. A long succession of combats followed between the 4th and the 9th of January; the Germans steadily made their way forward by La Ferté Bernard, St. Calais, and Bouloire, drawing towards each other on Chanzy's lines; and the young French soldiers, as was sure to happen, showed signs of weakness and loss of heart, as they retreated before their trained antagonists. The invaders, nevertheless, were greatly harassed, and suffered no inconsiderable loss, as they toiled through the district of thickets and streams, of infrequent roads, of passes and defiles, which divides the Loir from the Sarthe and the Huisne; and the mitrailleuse, an inferior weapon, was made to do good service, for the first time, in this close and difficult country. The general result of their first operations was that Chanzy's levies had been worsted, and part of his right wing had been isolated, and was unable to

join the main army. But the Germans had also been severely stricken;[1] and the 10th corps of Prince Frederick Charles was considerably, in the rear, on his left.

By the evening of the 9th of January, the Germans had converged on Chanzy's positions before Le Mans. The army of the Grand Duke, called again the 13th corps, comprising the divisions he had led for months, stood on the right, on the eastern bank of the Huisne; the centre, the 3rd and the 9th corps, held the main road that led from Vendôme to Le Mans, but the left, the 10th corps, we have seen, was distant. The leaders, on both sides, had wished to assume the offensive, but Chanzy, who had acutely felt the growing demoralization of his immature troops, took care to be the first to attack, in order to restore in some degree their confidence. On the 10th[2] another succession of engagements took place; at the centre the French were driven fairly back, and the 3rd corps stormed the hamlet of Changé almost on the verge of Chanzy's lines. But on the German right little progress was made; the Grand Duke, indeed, successfully crossed the Huisne, and placed part of his

[1] "La Deuxième Armée de La Loire," 307: "Tous les renseignements recueillis depuis, de la bouche même des officiers de l'état major prussien pendant leur séjour au Mans, confirment l'état de découragement auquel cette lutte opiniâtre et pied à pied avait réduit leurs troupes."

[2] As in the case with all the operations of Chanzy, the "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. p. 139-219, contains an imperfect and misleading description of this episode of the war. The real

troops on the western bank; but he was held in check by the enemy in his front, and he failed to execute the turning movement against the French left which had been his purpose. By nightfall Chanzy had drawn in his hard-pressed army within its lines, and made ready for a great fight on the morrow. His divisions, covered on part of their front by entrenchments, batteries, and obstacles of all kinds, affording a vantage ground to the fire of his infantry, were extended in a line of about ten miles in length, from the confluence of the Sarthe and the Huisne, to the villages of Chanteloup and Lombron, north of Le Mans, on the western bank of the Huisne; and they formed a semicircle around Le Mans, shielding the ancient town from the enemy's efforts. Chanzy's right, composed of part of his 16th corps—part, we have seen, had not come into line—held the roads that meet at Pontlieu, before Le Mans, the certain avenues of attack; and he had reinforced this wing with a body of Gardes Mobiles, despatched lately to his camps from Brittany. The 17th corps, his centre, was ranged along a series of uplands, known by the name of Auvours, the key of his position in front; and his left wing, the 21st corps, with other divisions, was placed on the western bank of the Huisne, to make head against the Grand Duke's forces. Chanzy

character of the battle of Le Mans especially is not placed correctly before the reader. The narrative of Chanzy, "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," pp. 223-371, is more complete and far more trustworthy. It deserves attentive study.

firmly held the passages of the Huisne, where his centre came in contact with his left; and his troops could support each other along the whole line, and had facilities for making counter-attacks. He had from 80,000 to 90,000 men in his hands, with between 300 and 400 guns.

The German leaders disposed of about 70,000 men, and rather more than 300 guns, to attack the French levies in this position. The general idea of their operations was this: the Grand Duke was to turn the left wing of Chanzy, by a great outflanking movement west of the Huisne, while Prince Frederick Charles was to assail the French centre in front. On the morning of the 11th the German columns marched on the points selected for attack; and the 3rd Corps, always foremost in the fight, which, as we have said, had seized Changé, advanced boldly against the heights of Auvours. The false tactics of Wörth were, however, repeated; the effort of the 3rd Corps was premature; the troops were exposed to their foes, so to speak, piecemeal, and the resistance of the French was so successful, that the 9th and even the 10th Corps, still in the rear, were summoned to take part in the frontal attack. The battle raged on for several hours; the spell of Chanzy's example and presence inspired his lieutenants and his best troops; he had terrified the weak and cowardly with severe menaces; the position of Auvours was taken and then retaken; and ultimately it remained in the defenders' power. Meanwhile the Grand Duke had been baffled; his

divisions proved unable to pass Chanteloup and Lombron, on the extreme French left; and the turning movement was stopped on this part of the line. By nightfall the French still held the positions they had fought for throughout a fiery trial; and Chanzy, who had been the soul of a masterly defence, directing his troops to every threatened point, and taking the offensive when the chances offered, looked forward at last to victory at hand.[1] Ere long, however, a disastrous incident changed the issue of the battle at the last moment. The 10th Corps, advancing towards Pontlieu, overwhelmed the Breton Mobiles in their path; the important point of La Tuilerie was lost; and Chanzy's right centre was pierced through by an enemy fast approaching Le Mans. Jauréguibbery, now the chief of the 16th Corps, as gallant a seaman as ever trod a deck, made a desperate effort to throw the Germans back; but the 10th Corps stubbornly held its ground, and though the French remained in their camps through the night, the position of Chanzy had become untenable.

It had now become necessary to retreat from Le Mans, and to resist the invaders on another line of defence. Had the Germans retained their effici-

[1] "L'action dura sur taute la ligne jusqu'à six heures du soir. La nuit était venue, nous étions restés maîtres de toutes nos positions, de ce côté comme au plateau d'Auvours, et sur la voie droite de l'Huisne. Notre seul echec sérieux avait été l'évacuation momentanée d'Auvours, mais il avait été rapidement et brillamment réparée."—La Deuxième Armée de la Loire, pp. 318-19. Not a word of this appears in the Prussian accounts.

ency and power, they ought to have annihilated the defeated army; but they had been hardly stricken in the late battle;[1] they had suffered from privations and forced marches, and their pursuit of the enemy was slow and feeble.[2] Thousands of Chanzy's recruits, indeed, disbanded, and he lost nearly a fourth part of his levies, but he drew off the mass of his army intact, and except a combat in the streets of Le Mans, and two or three insignificant skirmishes, he was scarcely molested in his retreat. Always steady in his purpose to relieve Paris, he intended at first to march on Alençon, where he would be nearer the capital than at Le Mans, and he probably could have attained his object, though the Prussian staff has condemned this strategy.[3] Gambetta, however, directed him to diverge westwards, in order to obtain reinforcements at hand, and to avoid an

[1] "The Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. p. 200, 205, 210, cannot conceal how much the Germans had suffered: "The Grand Duke had but few full battalions at his disposal; the exhaustion of his troops was great. . . . The effective of the 3rd Corps had become extremely weak, the loss on the last day, especially in officers, having been considerable. . . . Many of the companies were commanded by sergeant-majors."

[2] "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," pp. 347, 367:— L'ennemi ne s'était montré entreprenant nulle part. . . . Ils avaient du reste considérablement souffert pendant les trois derniers jours; leurs soldats étaient épuisés. . . . Ces instructions furent exécutées en tout point et sans que l'ennemi cherchât de nouveau á inquiéter la retraite."

[3] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. p. 200. This view is, no doubt, in theory right; and Chanzy was aware of the danger of a march on Alençon. But he probably would have reached the place; the pursuit was so ineffectual.

operation apparently rash: and by the 16th January he had reached the Mayenne, and had taken positions around Laval, another important strategic point, where he could easily receive aid from the north and the west. He was ere long strengthened by the 19th Corps, another of Gambetta's new creations; and, in a few days, he had to a great extent, reorganized and restored the Second Army of the Loire, with characteristic skill and energy. From Laval he still turned an eye on Paris, hoping against hope that he might yet reach the Seine; but though disasters were thickening all round, he continued to insist that the fall of the capital ought not to involve the submission of France, and he prepared himself for renewed efforts. Meanwhile the German leaders had given up a pursuit which had really been one only in name. The Grand Duke had been sent off into Normandy, the movements of the enemy in the north requiring assistance to be given to the First Army. The apparition, too, of the 25th Corps on the Loire had compelled Prince Frederick Charles to detach the 9th to observe and keep back this new hostile force; and Chanzy at Laval was only confronted by the 3rd and 10th Corps of the Second Army, not sufficiently strong to venture to attack.

In this brief and indecisive contest Chanzy had withstood trained and well-organized armies, which, but for the detachment left behind at Orleans, might have been nearly equal to his own in numbers,

with an army composed, in the main, of recruits. He had been defeated, no doubt, in a pitched battle, but the defeat only fell short of a victory; and, after his admirable defence of Le Mans, he had effected his retreat, and had been scarcely pursued, if panic and desertion had deprived him of some 20,000 of his young soldiers. The result does him the highest honour; the strategy and tactics of his antagonists, in truth, were very far from good, especially on the day of Le Mans; and his superiority as a leader became again manifest. But he had not the less been forced away from Paris; he had not a chance of relieving the capital now; the object of Moltke had been gained; the Grand Duke and Prince Frederick Charles had advanced from the external zone, and had driven their ablest adversary back, and they held a central position and stood on interior lines against Chanzy and his army on the Mayenne.

We pass on to the theatre of war in the north, where the ubiquitous contest was being still prolonged. After the indecisive battle on the Hallue, Faidherbe had fallen back, we have seen, northwards; and Péronne, the "virgin fortress" of the seventeenth century, had been besieged by part of the First Army. In the first days of January, Faidherbe advanced again, perhaps in the hope of relieving the place, which gave him a passage over the Somme, and on the 3rd he encountered a hostile force at Bapaume, not far to the south of Arras. The French were largely superior in numbers, and endeavoured to surround

and overwhelm their enemies; but the Germans made a stubborn defence, entrenched in the villages around Bapaume, and the combat remained for hours doubtful. At last, however, the assailants fairly won the day; their adversaries drew off from Bapaume, and signs of weakness and fear, it is said,[1] appeared not only among the troops, but even among some officers in command. The French, nevertheless, were so exhausted—a common failing with boyish soldiers—that they could not follow up their success; and Bapaume was ultimately regained by the enemy. Meanwhile Péronne had ere long fallen; the Germans did not attempt a regular siege, but the old and small fortress was quickly reduced, as was seen repeatedly in the war, by bombardment, a cruel but effective method, in the case of fortresses of this kind.

A greater and more important battle was fought on the 19th of January. The last days of the great siege had come, and Gambetta entreated Faidherbe to make a diversion in the north in the hope of assisting a final sortie from the falling capital. The French commander thought that his best course was to threaten the German communications eastwards, and he marched with his two corps on St. Quentin, a name of ill-omen in the annals of France. By this time Manteuffel had been replaced by Goeben, in the command of the

[1] Faidherbe quotes from a Berlin correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, referring to the engagement at Bapaume: "General von Goeben . . . demands from the commanders of regiments a list of officers who fled, that they may be instantly cashiered."

First Army, and the new chief, a very able man, followed his adversary along both banks of the Somme. An opportunity, perhaps,[1] was given to Faidherbe to turn back and try to defeat his pursuers in detail, but probably he felt that his rude levies were not equal to an operation of the kind, and he was close to St. Quentin on the 18th. Goeben, however, was at hand and ready to attack; and Faidherbe had no choice but to accept battle in defensive positions around the town. Moltke had long ceased to apprehend danger from attacks made by the Parisian armies; he had diminished, we have seen, the besieging forces, and he had just sent a detachment from the Army of the Meuse, to co-operate with Goeben in the impending conflict. The opposing armies were nearly equal in numbers, about 32,500 Germans to 40,000 French; and the result, therefore, was almost assured. Faidherbe indeed, showed skill and resource, and his levies made a gallant defence; but superior discipline and training prevailed, and he was forced to retreat again on the stronghold of the north, after losing 6000 or 7000 men. His attempt to give aid to Paris had, in a word, failed; and in his case, as in that of Chanzy, Moltke had successfully accomplished his task. The First Army had issued from the external zone, and driven away the approaching enemy; and Moltke, from the centre where he stood at Versailles, had been able to throw back

[1] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. p. 263. Chanzy would probably have made the attempt.

the provincial levies at another point of the vast circumference, on which they were compelled to advance. It should be added that the war in the north came to an end after the fight at St. Quentin; the Grand Duke, who had arrived at Rouen, and the First Army effectually kept down resistance between the Somme and the Seine.

We turn to the east to follow the course of Gambetta's ambitious, but ill-starred, enterprise.[1] The First Army of the Loire, pursued by no enemy, but retarded, on its way, and already weakened, had accomplished the first part of its mission; it had come into line with Cremer's troops and with the 24th corps, under Bressoles, of the south; and by the 2nd of January, the uniting forces were extended upon a long line, stretching from Dijon to Auxonne and Besançon. Bourbaki was now at the head of 150,000 men, and he advanced on a broad front, through Franche-Comté, to attack Werder, and to raise the siege of Belfort. The German chief was not 50,000 strong, and evacuated Dijon, Gray, and Vesoul; and the French commander began to look forward with hope to success, with his immensely more numerous forces. The

[1] The memorable and important operations of the belligerent armies in the east, most unfortunate for France, but honourable in the extreme to Germany, are fully, and on the whole, fairly described in the "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 287, 361, and Part ii. vol. iii. 1, 179. I am not aware that any of the French commanders have written on the subject. But the evidence of Bourbaki, and of Generals Borel and Clinchant given in the Enquête Parlementaire, is very valuable and full of interest.

march of his army, however, became very slow, as it reached the wooded and hilly region between the Saone, the Ognon, and the Doubs; the left wing under Cremer was far in the rear; the line of march was already crowded with disbanded men, and perishing horses, and ominous signs of distress were apparent. Nevertheless Fortune treacherously smiled at the outset on the ill-conceived adventure. Bourbaki encountered part of the army of Werder at Villersexel on the Ognon, on the 9th of January; the French levies, encouraged by their superior numbers, fought well and threw the enemy back; and after a long and well-contested struggle, the Germans retreated, beyond dispute, beaten.[1]

A great opportunity, at this moment, was possibly afforded to the French chief. Werder had hastily moved northwards; Villersexel is a point on the main road to Belfort, hardly three marches distant, and Bourbaki was as near the fortress as his defeated enemy. Had Bourbaki, therefore, pressed boldly forward, he might, perhaps, have raised the siege of Belfort before Werder could have interfered; and success, such as this, would have been most important. He made, however, a long halt of four days, and though his "inactivity" has been censured by the Prussian Staff,[2] his army, ill-

[1] The "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 318, does not admit this defeat, but it cannot be really questioned. Bourbaki deposed at the Enquête Parlementaire :—"L'ennemi fut mis en complète déroute, et laissa un grand nombre de prisonniers dans nos mains."

[2] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 322.

provided, and depending for supplies on the railway line from Besançon only, appears to have been unable to move.[1] The alarm of Werder was, nevertheless, great; he contemplated, perhaps, a further retreat; but Moltke, taking the bolder and wiser course, sent a message from Versailles by the telegraph, directing his lieutenant to "await attack, and to accept battle in the strong positions"[2] before Belfort. Werder, accordingly, marched across the front of the French army still fixed to its camps; and he found the point of vantage he sought behind the rocky banks of the Lisaine, a small river just west of Belfort. The position was one of great natural strength, though capable of being turned on both flanks. Three eminences protected a defender's front, the château and little town of Montbéliard afforded strong shelter on the left, and along the line from Héricourt, to the right

[1] Moltke had foreseen that the movements of Bourbaki must be retarded from this cause. "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. appendix, 168: "The operations of the enemy's forces, owing to generally defective organization of the commissariat and ammunition train, are tied to the railways." General Derrécagaix "La Guerre Moderne," ii. 331, acquits Bourbaki of making an unnecessary delay, and remarks: "Le général Bourbaki avait alors á surmonter de grandes difficultés pour le ravittaillement de son armée; et craignant de s'éloigner du chemin de fer de Besançon à Montbéliard qui était sa base d'approvisionnements, il fut forcé, pour avoir des vivres de perdre les 10, 11, 12, et 13 Janvier." Still Bourbaki did not lay stress on this cause of his halt before the Enquête Parlementaire; and possibly he might have done more than he did.

[2] "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. appendix, 176.

a series of villages, of farm-houses, and of petty hamlets, present formidable obstacles to attack. Werder fortified this position with skill and care; heavy guns were detached from the siege of Belfort, and placed in battery at vulnerable points, and precautions were taken to secure cover for the troops, and to give free and ample scope to their fire. He awaited the attack of an enemy threefold in numbers, with some 45,000 footmen and 150 guns.

The battle, or, rather, the series of battles, that followed,[1] were not without honour to France, but honourable in the highest degree to Germany. After preliminary skirmishes of no importance, Bourbaki advanced, on the 15th January, to attack the Germans in their strong lines of defence. He was familiar with the scene of the approaching conflict and with the numberless difficulties in his path; and his plan was to assail the enemy in front with the 15th, 24th, and 20th corps, on the space between Montbéliard and Héricourt, and imitating the manœuvre of Gravelotte, to turn his right at Changey and Chenebier with the 18th corps and Cremer's divisions. The French, animated by their late success, fell boldly on, and made their way into Montbéliard; and though unable to force the

[1] The description in the "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 331, 358, of the battles on the Lisaine should be compared with the elaborate and exact account of General Derrécagaix, "La Guerre Moderne," ii. 330, 362, and with Bourbaki's evidence at the Enquête Parlementaire.

centre of Werder, they kept the Germans all the day engaged in their formidable positions around Héricourt. The great out-flanking movement, on which all depended, was, however, delayed, and attempted too late; and both armies rested on the ground they occupied, Bourbaki expecting great things from the morrow. The battle raged along the whole line on the 16th, and the assailants, swept by a destructive fire, suffered cruelly as they endeavoured, in vain, to press the frontal attack with their superior numbers. But the turning movement at the French left was successful; Werder's right was out-flanked, and fell away defeated; Chenebier was occupied by the troops of Cremer; the road to Belfort was laid open, and the situation for the Germans became critical. Meantime, however, the defence of Héricourt had proved disastrous to the young French soldiers flung desperately against impassable lines. Cremer, in no sense a capable chief, was held in check by a demonstration on his left, and did not follow up the success he had gained, and, hard pressed as they were, the Germans maintained their ground. The difference was then conspicuously seen between a real army and an assemblage of levies. Bourbaki's troops were utterly worn out, and brought to a stand by the incessant fighting. A Council of War pronounced against a renewal of the attack, and an immediate retreat was declared necessary. The French columns, weakened by heavy losses, dispirited, and starved by hunger and cold, drew silently off from the fatal field; and

though not pursued by their wearied foes, became almost a fugitive horde, as they toiled painfully on their way to Besançon. The attempt to raise the siege of Belfort had failed, and Gambetta's project had come to nought from the outset.

Bourbaki was not a chief of the highest order, and he had little faith in an army of recruits; and Cremer had shown no resource in this protracted conflict. It is useless, however, to conjecture whether the French generals could have done more in the battles of Héricourt, as they have been called; the broad results need alone be glanced at. On the Lisaine, as at Le Mans and St. Quentin, the external zone had kept back the enemy; the purpose of Moltke had been fulfilled, and, in the case of Bourbaki, it would be well for France should his army escape an immense disaster. Through the successive defeats of the provincial levies, Paris was left isolated and without external aid, and the besiegers had made, before this time, the active attack they had long prepared. On the 27th of December the German batteries opened fire on the highlands of Avron, and the works on the spot, hastily thrown up, were made untenable after a short bombardment. The besiegers turned then on the eastern part of the city, and a tempest of shot, and shell rained for many days on the forts of Nogent, Rosny, and Noisy, and on the long line of the improvised defences extending from the Marne to the table-land of Romainville. The southern front, however, became the main point of attack.

This, we have seen, was the vulnerable side, and the exposed forts of Issy, Vanves, and Montrouge, with the redoubts and entrenchments along the space between, were swept for more than a fortnight by the concentrated fire of heavy guns placed on the heights commanding the enceinte and the capital beyond. An attempt was next made to destroy St. Denis, and the western front, in fact, was alone spared, covered by the great fortress of Valérien. These attacks, however, altogether failed; the injuries done to the forts and the defensive zone, trivial in themselves, were easily repaired. The losses of the besieged were very small; two or three of the forts, chiefly manned by seamen, made an admirable and most skilful defence, and the batteries of the besieged, as the struggle progressed, had a marked and daily increasing advantage. The siege train of the Germans, immense as it was, was not nearly sufficient for the gigantic attack, and the operations of their engineers, besides, gave little proof of science or resource.

Experiments meanwhile were tried to affright the world of the city into submission. Moltke had been averse to bombarding Paris.[1] He probably foresaw the attempt would fail, and Bismarck[2] had been of the same opinion. But Germany had made

[1] "I should not wish to be in a hurry to adopt the last cruel alternative of a regular bombardment." (Moltke to his brother Adolf, "Letters," ii. 61. English Translation.)

[2] "On ne bombarde pas une ville comme Paris, mais peut-être, cependant, nous faudra-t-il, à un moment donné, en venir à cette dernière extremité," was a remark made by Bismarck to the aide-

a great national effort, and felt the savage passions of a war of races; and the German commanders were forced to leave nothing undone to quell the resistance of France at its fountain-head. While the forts and the enceinte were being attacked, the city was ravaged with flights of shells, and the storm of missiles raged day after day, carrying devastation and death in its course. The noblest edifices seemed marked out for destruction: the churches, the hospitals, the historic buildings—the glory of centuries—which adorn Paris, were wrecked and marred in too many instances, and the pitiless volleys crashed through peaceful roofs, or broke in fury in stately squares and streets. Yet this inhuman and reckless warfare, without a parallel in a civilized age, that recalled the onslaught of the barbarians on Rome, and that might have annihilated treasures above price of science and art, the delight of mankind, proved, as was to be expected, utterly fruitless. Two or three hundred inoffensive townsmen were slain, and considerable material damage was done; but the bombardment did not hasten by a single hour the impending fall of the suffering city; and this alone is enough to stamp it with disgrace. On the contrary, it excited indignation and wrath, and roused the population to make new efforts; and it has left memories behind which will not be forgotten as long as Paris retains life and a heart. The attack, in truth, whether on the armed

de-camp of Bazaine before referred to.—"Guerre de 1870-1," p. 221.

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defences, or on the city, rising from their midst, only showed how prodigious is the strength of the position given by nature to Paris; how powerful her fortifications were, even against the ordnance of modern times, and how impotent were the besiegers' efforts.[1]

The exasperation caused by the bombardment led to an angry and general demand that another and final sortie should be made. The Government, yielding to popular clamour, weakly consented, against its real wishes, for every general felt the attempt to be hopeless. The points selected for attack were, perhaps, the strongest in the whole circle of the German lines; and possibly in this instance also the multitude overbore Troçhu. King William had just been proclaimed Emperor, to the delight of the whole Teutonic race, in the magnificent hall which had mirrored the splendours for a century of the Bourbon monarchy; and this exhibition, which may yet prove an illustration of

[1] The "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 362, 390, describes very imperfectly and uncandidly the bombardment of Paris. The elaborate account of General Ducrot, "La Défense de Paris," iii. 232, 312; and iv. 1, 27; and the excellent volume of M. Viollet le Duc, should be carefully perused. See these works especially as regards the bad quality of the German offensive works; the evident deficiency of the engineers in scientific knowledge; the complete failure of the attacks on the forts, the enceinte, and the city; and the feelings of hatred and anger they provoked. These views are confirmed by many English eye-witnesses. Major Clarke, "Fortification," 63, remarks: "In spite of their innumerable defects, the Paris defences, built before the revolution in artillery, were an unexpected triumph for fortification."

the irony of Fate, had so irritated Paris before the event, that a cry had arisen to break out at Versailles. The National Guards insisted that they should take a principal part in a last struggle, and on the 19th of January a huge array of troops, levies, and National Guards was assembled, under the guns of Valérien, in the first peninsula formed by the bends of the Seine, to attack the besiegers from the space that extends between St. Cloud and Malmaison to Versailles beyond. The advance of the columns, however, had been very slow, for there were only two bridges to cross the river. The enemy had had ample time to make preparations and guard against surprise and, as we have said, the German defences at this part of their front were formidable in the extreme. The battle was fierce, and protracted for hours, but the ultimate issue was never doubtful. The French, indeed, gained partial success. Vinoy, on the left, forced the hostile outposts at St. Cloud; Ducrot penetrated into Malmaison on the right; and Buzenval, in the centre, was stormed and occupied. But the attack was broken against the triple folds of the entrenchments forming the main defence; the assailants, 100,000 fighting men at least, were crowded upon a narrow front that did not give space for 25,000. Unable to deploy and to make their numbers felt, they were struck down by the destructive fire of enemies sheltered and almost concealed; and the scenes that had been witnessed at Villiers were repeated with far more disastrous results. After repelling a

hostile counter-attack and vainly displaying fruitless courage, the French gradually drew off from the field, and despair had soon mastered the defeated army, little accustomed to the stern realities of war. The bridges and roads were choked by the broken masses hurrying away in precipitate flight; order, discipline, and military bearing were lost, and the spectacle of its own defenders filled the city with affright.

This disaster provoked a movement in Paris like that which had been seen before, when the sortie of the 21st of December had failed. The Press of the rabble teemed with angry invectives, clubs were harangued by orators of the mob, denouncing the men in office as knaves and traitors; a cry went forth that the citizens, in a mass, with their wives and children, should march out and fight, and folly and fury reigned in too many places. A partial rising of the dregs of society was ominous too of impending perils, and the foul creatures, who were soon to strew whole quarters of the city with ashes and blood, began to make their evil influence felt, by villainous appeals to patriotic passion. The Government, terrified, perplexed, and hopeless, made no attempt to exert its authority, and Trochu was removed from supreme command, a scapegoat, indeed, but not unjustly deemed to have been unequal to a most arduous task. Nevertheless, order and obedience to law continued to prevail through the world of Paris, and this though the sufferings of all classes of the population were almost

beyond endurance. By this time the store of provisions had dwindled down to the supply of a few days, the whole of the citizens had been put on rations, the most odious kind of food was a welcome repast, death revelled in the train of ever-present want, and every night darkness, that might be felt, fell like a pall over the scenes once gay with exuberant life, and brilliant pleasure, or was made more fearful by the distant gleams that marked the lines of the besiegers' watch-fires. The spirit of resignation and self-sacrifice kept, however, the community together, in the trial; noble examples of charity and piety were made, and the wit of Paris flashed out to the last, as troops of urchins mockingly offered for sale fragments and splinters of the enemy's impotent shells. But the end of the long defence had come; the great city, still unsubdued, was forced to yield to famine. Bismarck and Favre, the minister, had two or three interviews, and the terms of the capitulation were arranged, on the 26th of January, 1871. The regular troops, including the Gardes Mobiles, the marines and seamen, laid down their arms; the forts were occupied by German garrisons, and the immense material of war on the spot passed into the hands of the exulting conquerors. Meanwhile an armistice of three weeks was agreed to, a National Assembly was to be convened, and France was to pronounce on the question of war or peace. Two provisions of the negotiations require notice;[1] for reasons

[1] This exception, which involved the ruin of Bourbaki's army,

never fully explained, the theatre of military operations in the east was still to remain a scene of hostilities, and the National Guard, too largely composed of elements of the most dangerous kind, and controlled only by officers chosen by itself, was, at the instance of Favre, allowed to retain its arms.

The defence of Paris will form, for all time, a conspicuous feature in the history of the world. The military operations, indeed, did not give proof of originality or peculiar skill, and they were marked by the want of steadfastness, and the divided counsels, so fatal to France in this part of the war. The project of breaking out by the western front, and conducting an army to the coast, as a base, devised by Ducrot, and not without promise, was abandoned in deference to popular cries; a systematic attempt to force the besiegers' lines by counter approaches was not made, and mistakes occurred in all the sorties. It will always, too, be doubtful in the extreme whether Paris, immense as were its resources, could have set itself free by its own efforts; whether an army of relief was not

has been accounted for in different ways. The "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. ii. 390, says that "both sides anticipated a successful result;" but Ducrot, "La Défense de Paris," iv. 296, insists that Favre knew, or ought to have known, that Bourbaki was in the gravest peril, and severely blames the minister. Still, he admits, iv. 306, that, even at this time, much was expected from Bourbaki. Bismarck and Moltke were probably aware of the real state of the case, and kept it to themselves, even if it be true that Bismarck gave a broad hint to Favre.

necessary to second the attacks of the citizens from within; and difficult as their position was, the men in power, and especially Trochu, were not capable, and exhibited weakness. These circumstances, however, do not detract from the grandeur of the defence in its true aspect. The world scornfully denied that a luxurious capital, a centre, beyond all others, of frivolous pleasure, would venture to stand the trial of a siege, and yet Paris resisted the mighty power of the German armies for more than four months, and was unconquered, when it was forced to succumb. That such a city should have created great armies in a few weeks, out of levies of recruits, and its own population, was a marvel of energy; that it should have kept the hosts of the invaders at bay, and made the result of the contest long uncertain, was an extraordinary passage of war; above all, that during a protracted period of suffering, of privations, and of agony at last, it should have presented, with rare exceptions, the spectacle of heroic endurance, of noble patience, and of social order, was a magnificent instance of patriotic duty. It is deplorable to have to add that this glorious achievement was ere long tarnished by the frightful crimes that disgraced the Reign of Terror of the Commune; but these should not be laid to the charge of the mass of the citizens. They were the deeds of a few wicked men, who laid hold of elements of disorganization and trouble, that came to a head in a time of disorder and anarchy; they were largely due to the unwisdom that left

arms in the hands of dregs of the populace, and they were committed at a time when the minds of men were distempered by indignation and passion, as in the case of the massacres of September, 1792.

The armistice found Chanzy, at Laval, at the head of an army, still equal to war, and reinforced by a new corps, the 26th, raised by Gambetta's incessant exertions. In arranging the lines of demarcation between the lately contending forces, Moltke had insisted on occupying the southern bank of the Loire; and there can be little doubt that his object was, in the event of hostilities being resumed, to cut Chanzy off from the southern provinces, and to drive him, isolated and beaten, into the west. But the great French chief had anticipated this attack; and he had thought a plan of operations out, which he confidently hoped, might yet wring a peace honourable to his country, from an exhausted enemy. Within three months France would be able to place more [1] than 600,000 men in the field, without reckoning Bourbaki's army, and the Parisian levies by this time lost; and Chanzy calculated that with these forces, directed with care by his masterhand, he would be able to maintain a guerilla warfare, with the support of other chiefs, and of the national rising, retreating from point to point, and taking advantage of every position between the Loire and the Pyrenees,[2] and so harassing the Germans that

[1] "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," p. 416.

[2] Moltke and the German generals were seriously apprehensive of the consequences of a resistance of this kind; and no impartial

at last, war-worn and fatigued as they already were, they would accept conditions not unfavourable to France. He proposed, therefore, to lead his army, now more than 200,000 strong, into Poitou, and to await events; and in letters resembling those of Wellington, when the great Englishman planned the defence of Portugal, the Du Guesclin of the war of 1870-1 showed how safety might be plucked from danger, if France would earnestly second his heroic efforts. It is idle to say that his projects were vain, when we bear in mind what he had accomplished in his admirable operations between the Loire and the Mayenne; and it should be recollected that, by this time, the efficiency of the German armies, largely filled with landwehr and mere recruits, was being diminished day after day.[1]

observer denied, at the time, that it might have been successful. Some courtiers of fortune, and writers inspired from Germany, were found in England, who condemned this kind of warfare as "unfair;" as if Thermopylæ, Saguntum, Morat, Valleyforge, Saragossa were not names immortal in history.

[1] Chanzy's views should be carefully studied. They will be found in "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," pp. 417, 424. We quote a single passage from his remarkable despatches:—"Les troupes, dont nous disposons, il ne faut pas se le dissimuler, n'ont encore ni une organisation assez solide, ni une cohésion suffisante, ni une assez grande habitude de la vie militaire, pour constituer des armées pouvant manœuvrer et lutter avec constance et persistance contre celles que l'ennemi va pouvoir leur opposer en nombre au moins égal. Il faut donc éviter les engagements qui peuvent être décisifs. Le but à atteindre est d'affirmer l'idée de la résistance et de la produire sur tous les points à la fois, de façon à forcer l'ennemi à se disperser, d'obliger l'Alle-

Meanwhile, however, an appalling disaster had befallen the army, rashly sent, in ignorance of war, by Gambetta to the east. Moltke and his lieutenants, we have seen,[1] had remained unaware, during many days, of the march of the Second Army of the Loire; and the first week of January had almost passed, before the direction Bourbaki had taken had been ascertained at the German head-quarters. But Moltke had already, with excellent forethought,[2] despatched, we have pointed out, the 2nd Corps to support the 7th, on the long space between the Germans on the Loire and Werder's forces; and these arrays holding this part of the external zone, were, by the 12th of January, approaching each other, between Châtillon on the Seine, and Nuits on the Armançon, an affluent of

magne à maintenir en France une armée d'au moins 500,000 hommes de lui imposer des sacrifices qui finiront par le lasser, et d'atteindre aussi le moment où solidement organisés nous pourrons, par un suprême effort, entreprendre, dans de bonnes conditions, de refouler l'ennemi de notre territoire. Ce que les Allemands redoutent le plus, c'est la guerre de détail, la defense du sol pied à pied, la résistance derriere tous les obstacles. C'est ce qu'il faut obtenir du véritable patriotisme de nos populations. Les armées, les corps formés ne doivent être que des points d'appui, des moyens ménagés pour profiter habilement des fautes de l'ennemi, de ses échecs, et de sa dispersion. Il faut donc organiser partout la defense locale en faisant appel à tous les gens de cœur, en les groupant autour de personalités influentes dans leur propre pays, habituant la nation a l'idée des sacrifices qu'elle doit faire. Il faut, qu'après avoir disputé le terrain pied à pied on le céde à l'ennemi en faisant le vide autour de lui, en le privant de toute ressource."

[1] See ante, p. 341.

[2] See ante, p. 334.

Yonne to the west. When the march of Bourbaki had become fully known, Manteuffel, the chief of the First Army, was sent from the north to lead the 7th and 2nd Corps, from 50,000 to 60,000 strong, against the enemy in Franche-Comté; and the German commander at once set off bearing quickly down on his still distant quarry. The march of the advancing columns in intense cold, across the barren and wind-swept uplands of Langres, was difficult in the extreme and marked with many hardships, but it was admirably carried out and very quick; and here we see distinctly the prodigious difference between a trained and well-organized army, and an assemblage of levies, ill provided and equipped. Garibaldi, we have said, had been directed to guard against an attempt from this side; another French division, too, had been thus employed; but Manteuffel pushed aside his surprised foes, and kept them in check by small detachments; and on the 20th, he was upon the Saone, having ably made a most arduous movement. By this time the battles of Héricourt had been fought; Bourbaki was in retreat southwards; and Werder was about to pursue his enemy through the intricate country that leads to Besançon. With an inspiration worthy of a great captain, Manteuffel resolved not to join Werder, well able, after his success, to protect himself, but to press on eastward, without stopping a moment, and falling on Bourbaki's exposed flank, to cut him off from his line of retreat to the south. By the 21st his

advanced guard was upon the Doubs; by the 23rd it occupied the main road which descends from Besançon on Lyons; and Bourbaki was already in the gravest peril. Moltke had not ordered, but he highly praised,[1] a movement promising immense results, if certainly in some respects hazardous, a movement, we should add, in keeping with the principles of war he had impressed on the minds of every German chief.

Bourbaki, meantime, had been effecting his retreat from the Lisaine on Besançon. His march, we have seen, was not molested at first, for the losses of Werder had been severe; and he[2] succeeded, in some measure, in restoring discipline and in inspiring his troops with hope. But supplies failed the stricken and exhausted soldiery; thousands perished through cold and the ravages of disease,[3] and his army again became a wreck, before Besançon was even approached. At this place the unfortunate chief found himself in a situation strongly resembling that of Napoleon, in 1812, when the Emperor was apprized, at Smolensk, that his famishing host, with Kutusoff hanging on its rear, was intercepted by Wittgenstein and

[1] Moltke made this report to the king on Manteuffel's conduct. "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. iii. 10: "General v. Manteuffel's movement is extremely bold, but it may lead to the greatest results; should he suffer a check he ought not to be blamed, for in order to gain great success, something must be risked."

[2] Bourbaki asserted this at the Enquête Parlementaire, and his evidence bears all the marks of truth.

[3] Small-pox was very destructive in Bourbaki's army.

Tchitchakoff, as it was making for the Beresina on its way to Poland. Bourbaki had been promised that at Besançon he would receive an ample store of supplies; he had been assured that Garibaldi possessed the means of effectually protecting his flank on his march, and of keeping back any enemies on his path. But no magazines had been formed at Besançon; there were provisions for a few days only; and Werder was already pressing the French from the north, while Manteuffel was closing round from the south. The situation was well-nigh desperate; yet Bourbaki probably did all that could be expected from a stout and gallant soldier. He directed his 18th and 24th corps to throw Werder back and to cover the retreat, and he pushed forward his 15th and 20th corps, with Cremer, to gain the second main road leading from Besançon, east of the first, on Lyons. Werder, however, routed his enemy in the rear, the second avenue of escape was barred by Manteuffel's rapidly converging forces; and the French general had no real choice left, but to diverge eastward towards the Swiss frontier, and to seek the means of effecting his retreat, through the defiles between the Upper Doubs and the Jura. By this time, however, his ruined army[1] was scarcely able to keep the field;

[1] Bourbaki described the state of his army at the Enquête Parlementaire in these words:—"La démoralisation des troupes était profonde, elle était la conséquence des circonstances, des misères supportées, de la satisfaction incomplète des besoins matériels, de la jeunesse se soldats, de leur manque d'habitude des choses de la guerre, de leur defaut d'instruction, et surtout

winter, hunger, and discouragement had done their work, and despair had taken possession of the ill-fated commander. He had been defeated, and cruelly deceived; he could scarcely hope to avert another Sedan, and, at this terrible moment, he was recklessly goaded by Gambetta urging him to break out at Auxonne, a movement dangerous in the extreme, in any case,[1] and possible only to a well-equipped army. The reason of the brave soldier suddenly gave way, and in his agony, he made an attempt on his own life.[2]

The command of Bourbaki was taken by Clin-

d'education militaire, du manque de cadres, et d'anciens soldats façonnés au métier . . . . Ceci ce faisait Messieurs, avec un froid de 15 degrés en moyenne, un verglas épouvantable . . . . Nos chevaux d'artillerie tombaient tous les quatres pas; il fallait les relever, il retombaient; on les relevaient ils tombaient encore; et cela durait toute la journée."

[1] The "Prussian Staff History," Part ii. vol. iii. p. 40, indicates that this movement was conceivable, and undoubtedly Manteuffel's centre was rather exposed at this point. But Bourbaki insisted at the Enquête Parlementaire that it was impossible in the existing state of his army, and it would at best have exposed the French to be hemmed in between the Doubs, the Ognon, and the Saone. The best proof that he was right is that all his colleagues, with one doubtful exception, concurred in his views; and his successor, a distinguished soldier, was of the same opinion."

[2] Bourbaki's account of this incident is pathetic; he has long ago disappeared from the army, of which he was an ornament, but we do not know if he is dead:—"La crainte de voir mon armée internée en Suisse, le manque de vivres pour mes troupes, l'appréciation injuste que le ministre de la guerre faisait d'efforts, si constants, si soutenus, si désespérés, tentés dans des conditions de température affreuses, toutes ces pénsées m'assaillirent, et alors . . . . l'accident est arrivé."

chant, an officer who had distinguished himself in the operations of the French from first to last. The new general, without hesitation, followed the dispositions of his late chief; and moved his worn-out army towards Pontarlier, only a few miles from the edge of Switzerland, while he left nothing untried to secure the possession of the one and the only road still open to the south. It was now the 28th of January; and but for an unhappy incident, the greater part of the First Army of the Loire might, perhaps, have escaped along this line, a defile, we have said, between the Jura and the heads of the Doubs. The approach is closed from the side of Franche-Comté, by hills impassable, save at two points; and Clinchant pushed forward horsemen to occupy these, and so to bar an hostile advance, his purpose being to conduct the mass of his forces, from Pontarlier along the defile towards Lyons. But on the 29th, a despatch arrived informing the French commander that a cessation of arms had been arranged between the belligerent Powers, but leaving out the all-important fact that this did not extend to operations in the East of France; and this fatal blunder seems to have been due to the negligence of Favre, who had almost lost his head.

Clinchant claimed the benefit of the armistice; but Manteuffel, made aware of the truth, refused to suspend hostilities beyond a few hours, and this sealed the doom of the French army. Even before the armistice had been announced, a small detach-

ment of German cavalry had seized one of the two passes, but so weakly that it might have been easily dislodged; and the rearward corps of the retiring army had been defeated not far from Pontarlier. Escape nevertheless was still possible,[1] had not Clinchant stopped the march of his columns, in the belief that the contest had come to an end, and had not the exhausted soldiery made a halt, along the whole line, at the news of the armistice, and generally shown reluctance to stand to their arms.[2] The Germans had soon closed in on all sides: a few thousand men and a number of officers contrived to make their way through the defile southwards, but the remains of the French army, 80,000 fugitives, had no choice but to break up from Pontarlier and to find a refuge in the neutral ground of Switzerland, where they were lost to France should the war be prolonged. The arms of France had thus, for the second time, met a disaster like that of the Army of Châlons; and the project of Gambetta, ill-conceived in principle, but in-

[1] This at least was Bourbaki's judgment at the Enquête Parlementaire:—"Cette armée courait le risque d'être internée en Suisse. Les évènements ont prouvé depuis cette nécessité même n'aurait pas été subie par la 1re armée, si l'armistice n'avait pas eu lieu, ou s'il n'avait été donné à mon successeur aucun ordre de l'observer avant que la commandant des forces ennemies eût reçu les mêmes instructions."

[2] Evidence of General Clinchant at the Enquête Parlementaire:—"La nouvelle de l'armistice avait achevé de détruire le moral."

"Pourquoi nous battrons nous," disaient les soldats, "si nos camarades des autres armées ne se battent plus?"

sensate, under existing conditions of climate, and military organization and force, had ended in an immense catastrophe. Yet this result would not have been obtained had not the arms of Germany been directed with ability and energy both consummate. The operations of Manteuffel deserve the highest praise; they were worthy of Moltke's best teaching; Werder seconded Manteuffel with vigour and effect; and in the movements which annihilated Bourbaki's army, we see again the self-reliance, the well-concerted action, the boldness, the resolution, the well-prepared efforts conspicuous on the side of Germany in the first part of the war, but seldom exhibited in the second part.[1]

The catastrophe of Bourbaki's army was soon followed by the fall of Belfort, after a protracted and admirably-sustained defence. Many other fortresses had been captured, besides those already referred to, and the whole interior of France, between the Loire and the Seine, had been laid open to the invaders. These sieges had exhibited the same features: a bombardment had had decisive effects, where the places attacked were old and

[1] In addition to the authorities before referred to, a good analysis of these operations in the East of France will be found in General Pierron's work, "Stratégie et Grande Tactique," vol. i. pp. 122, 158. General Ducrot, "La Défense de Paris," vol. iv. pp. 346, 355, contends that, but for the mistake respecting the armistice, Clinchant would have saved the largest part of the army, and indicates how this was on the point of being accomplished. Ducrot, however, disliked Favre and throws as much blame on him as is possible.

small, but regular operations had, in most instances, been feebly conducted, with tardy success, even against garrisons of mere levies, and the Germans had shown little skill in the art of the engineer. The succession of disasters which had reached a climax in the surrender of Paris, and the calamity in the east, broke down the spirit of resistance in France, and the National Assembly, that had met at Bordeaux, virtually accepted the terms imposed by the conquerors. Chanzy, however, maintained to the last moment, that the war might be continued with good hopes of success, on the system of which he had laid down the lines; and if we bear in mind the resources still possessed by France, the great deeds of her illustrious soldier, and that his judgment was formed under the gravest sense of responsibility incurred by himself, and in the presence of immense dangers, few will venture to say that he was wholly in error. He recorded his convictions in weighty words, at which the worshippers of success have scoffed, but of which history will form a very different estimate. "No doubt we must seek for the causes of our defeats, in the weakness and insufficiency of our organization for war, seduced as we were for some years by false, ignorant, or factious opinions, and in the want of unity, fatally conspicuous in all our strategic combinations; but, in our judgment, we, who had found again, in our improvised armies, the great military qualities, which are the inalienable heritage of our nation, the chief cause of our final disasters

was our want of confidence in ourselves. Our fine armies had been lost, our capital had fallen after glorious and heroic efforts; and we ceased to believe that success was possible, when it was still within our reach." [1] [2]

The Treaty of Frankfort set a seal to the results of the war of 1870-1. German horsemen rode under the Arch of the Star, a monument raised to the Grand Army, as Napoleon's Guards had passed through Berlin; and Germany glories in Metz and Sedan, as France gloried in Jena and Austerlitz. A ransom was extorted from the vanquished nation, unexampled in the annals of war; it was stripped of two of its most loyal proyinces; and Alsace and Lorraine have been held ever since by force, a trophy of conquest that will be hardly lasting. It has been generally understood, that unlike Bismarck, Moltke insisted on this territorial cession; but to do him justice he had no sympathy with noisy pedants, who, as in the case of Schleswig

[1] "La Deuxième Armée de la Loire," p. 448.

[2] Moltke is somewhat chary of merited praise when he merely remarks, "The Franco-German War," vol. ii. p. 46, English Translation, that "General Chanzy was certainly the most capable of all the leaders, whose duty it became to fight the invaders in the open fields." It is gratifying to know that the real hero of the second part of the war of 1870-1 was received, during a visit to Berlin, some years afterwards, with the greatest cordiality and distinction by the Emperor William, his adversary Prince Frederick Charles, and Moltke himself. The "stetimus tela aspera contra, contulimusque manus" should create a brotherhood in the noble profession of arms, as in the cases of Turenne and Condé, of Eugène and Villars, of Soult and Wellington.

Holstein, fabricated a claim for Prussia, to possessions to which she had no shadow of a right. With Radetski, he thought that Imperial rule was best secured by a strong frontier, whatever animosities this might provoke; and, with a marked aversion to the French character, and little real experience of mankind, he caused the Tricolor to be torn down from Metz and Strasbourg, indifferent to the traditions and feelings of Frenchmen. Yet the Austrian eagle has disappeared from the Adige and the Mincio, in the course of events which prove that the sword does not rule the world; and, in the negotiations of 1871, Moltke gave no proof of Wellington's forethought, who warned the allies that a discontented France, with her vast elements of military power, would permanently endanger the repose of Europe. The peace dictated by victorious Germany has already had many evil results, and is pregnant with future and general troubles. A second Poland has been formed on the Rhine; and clumsy attempts to win the hearts of a people justly devoted to France, have ended in conspicuous failure. The Continent has become a huge armed camp, for every State has been compelled to imitate the Prussian military system to protect its interests; alliances have been formed against France, in the hope of averting universal war; and France herself, renewing her strength, with the elastic energy of life she has always displayed, has become more formidable on land and at sea, than she has been since the days of Napoleon, and is only biding her

time to take vengeance on an enemy she deems a hateful despoiler. In this position of affairs peace must be precarious; and uneasiness, and a sense of ever-impending danger, pervades the public mind in five-sixths of Europe. Yet the worst feature of the situation is this: the Triple alliance combined against France, has necessarily caused France to draw near to Russia; and this ominous conjunction may lead to a contest, to which history can show no parallel. In the irony of Fate, Napoleon's prediction may be realized in a not distant future; and if Europe, in the progress of events, shall become half Republican and half Cossack, this will be largely ascribed to the unwise Peace of Frankfort.

The second part of the war of 1870-1 was not, like the first, a great drama of well connected and defined acts, leading, in quick succession, to a tragic conclusion. It was rather a long and eventful epic, abounding in episodes of profound interest, ending in a mighty struggle of race, but grand and heroic in its highest aspects. We have endeavoured to describe the part played by Moltke in this magnificent spectacle of human action, and we shall not repeat what we have already written. His figure stands out in supreme prominence, in the earlier scenes of the great contest. He conducts hosts, largely fashioned by himself, from the Vistula and the Elbe to the Rhine and the Meuse, and, steadily carrying out a preconcerted plan, directs them against the weak armies of France; and, if in the

conflict that follows he does not display military genius of the very highest order, if he triumphs mainly through the errors of his foes, and his own overwhelming superiority of force, he astonishes the world by his prodigious success, and he shows that he has many of the gifts of a great warrior. In the second phase of the strife, he is suddenly beset by unforeseen and immense obstacles; he is arrested in his course of victory, and is troubled and perplexed for a time; and his personality loses its commanding place, in view of the resistance of Paris, and the wonderful national rising of France. He, nevertheless, remains conspicuous, giving proof of grand constancy, and strength of will; and when, owing to accidents, and his enemy's mistakes, and the passionate support of a united Germany, he extricates himself from surrounding perils, he shows remarkable military skill, and directs operations that deserve the highest praise. Yet the figures of Gambetta, with all his failings, and of Chanzy, superior in defeat to Fortune, will probably fill as large a space [1] on the page of history, as that of

[1] Mr. Fyffe, "History of Modern Europe," vol. iii. 452, truly remarks: "Whatever share the military errors of Gambetta and his rash personal interference with commanders may have had in the ultimate defeat of France, without him it would never have been known of what efforts France was capable. The proof of his capacity was seen in the hatred and fear with which down to the time of his death he inspired the German people. Had there been at the head of the army of Metz a man of one-tenth of Gambetta's effective force, it is possible that France might have closed the war, if not with success, at least with undiminished territory."

Moltke, in the later passages of the war of 1870-1; and the noble and patriotic efforts of France will certainly be their most striking feature. For the rest Germany did not exhibit in a movement, which had some things in common with the great movement of 1793-4, the recklessness, the folly, and the lust for war, exhibited by Revolutionary France; but she made a bad use of the rights of conquest, and Nemesis seldom fails to avenge injustice.

The war, we should add, like all great wars, brought clearly out, the essential qualities, and historical antecedents of the Powers in conflict. Prussia, a state long of the second order, and trodden under foot in 1806-12, but conscious of her inherent strength, and chafing at the inferior position she held, submitted patiently to a severe discipline to make her able to cope with France; and when her military resources had become so vast, that ultimate success was almost assured, she obtained the aid of a dependent Germany, engaged in the conflict with steadfast purpose, and persisted in it, with unflinching firmness, enormous as was the strain on her energies. Taught by adversity not to be rash, stern, resolute, and determined to make their influence felt, the hitherto divided German races joined in the crusade against their ancient foe; and, thoroughly prepared and ready for war, never relaxed their efforts until they had gained their end. France, on the other hand, proud of her renown in arms, and carelessly relying on mere traditions, enfeebled by a corrupt and

unstable government, and devoted for years to the pursuits of peace, had allowed her military power to dwindle and decay; and she rushed thoughtlessly into a gigantic struggle, in which she had hardly a chance of real success. The result was soon seen by an astounded Europe; the armies of the effete empire, and their worthless and incapable leaders, went down like leaves before the autumn blast; and the first victories of Germany were beyond example. France, however, refused to confess defeat; the heroism of the race was shown in its noble resolve to defend the natal soil; and hopeless as the situation was deemed, the conflict that followed was so desperate, so well sustained, so fierce, so prolonged, that Germany was tasked to the very utmost, to obtain the success that had seemed secure. Yet in that final struggle organized force, trained military power and wise direction, prevailed at last over all the efforts of patriotic valour and passion often misguided, and thrown away; and in this supreme crisis France displayed the failings repeatedly seen in her chequered history, misplaced energy, discordant counsels, and a proneness to follow the first leader, who has the audacity to assume a dictator's part.

France could have obtained a less onerous peace, had she submitted to the terms of her conquerors, after the defeat of her Imperial armies. The circumstance has been made a pretext for condemning her heroic resistance; but only weak heads or corrupt hearts will accept a cowardly and

false argument. A nation's most precious possession is its honour; and France would have forfeited this great heritage, had she tamely bowed her neck to the yoke, after Wörth, Spicheren, Gravelotte and Sedan. She took the wiser and nobler course; and if she has suffered in the result, the gain has been infinitely more important. By the defence of Paris and the great national rising, she has blotted out the disgrace that fell on her arms; Metz and Sedan did not leave her degenerate; she justified her claim to stand in the rank of the ruling Powers and races of mankind. Nay, from a mere material point of view, her perseverance in the contest did her immense benefit. It was not in vain that rustic and noble, that men of science and art, and men of trade, took up arms to fight for the natal soil; that Paris endured the agony of the siege; that France sent her sons in hundreds of thousands to do battle with a revengeful but alarmed enemy. The struggle proved how gigantic is her power; how she succumbed mainly through mere accidents that probably will not occur again; that in spite of the cant of the courtiers of Fortune, she has far more inherent strength than Germany; that she is a great and formidable Power of the first order. A German commander will hardly venture to advance hastily on Paris again, whatever may have been his triumphs in the field.

CHAPTER XI.

Welcome given to Moltke on his return from the war in France—Honours and distinctions conferred on him—He resumes his post as Chief of the Staff—His dislike of flattery—His declining years—Celebration of his sixtieth year of military service—His work with the General Staff—Preparation for war—Speeches in the Reichstag and Prussian Chamber—Jealousy of France—Life at Creisau—Moltke retires from the post of Chief of the Staff—Celebration of his ninetieth birthday—His death—Reflections on his career.

MOLTKE had passed his seventieth year by some months when his splendid but brief career in the field closed. Germany instinctively felt that her extraordinary success was due to him more than to any other leader, and gave him a national greeting on his return from France. On the day when the victorious soldiers of Prussia defiled through the exulting streets of Berlin, after a long march from the Seine to the Spree, thousands of eyes turned on the impressive figure of the veteran who had directed the arms that had gained triumphs without a parallel, and thousands of voices rang out a joyous acclaim. Deserved honours fell thick on the illustrious warrior. His sovereign and friend relaxed in his behalf rules that excluded him from certain high grades and dignities. He received the

staff of a Field Marshal, the special distinction of a commander-in-chief, a rank he had not technically attained; the Prussian Chambers voted him a large sum of money, and cities vied with each other to give him their freedom. Yet Moltke cared little for these things, and quietly resumed the duties of Chief of the Staff, which had been for years his task and his delight. The real head of the great hosts of Prussia, surrounded by colleagues formed by his hand, and directing younger men to tread in their steps, he went steadily on in the incessant work of military organization, which was his peculiar excellence, and of elaborating to still higher perfection the mighty instrument of war of which he had been a chief creator. Mistakes made in the late war were noted; defects in the army and its dependent services were carefully examined and set right; and the great "Staff History" of the events of 1870-1 was compiled under Moltke's own auspices—spite of many faults, a remarkable work. The famous Chief of the Staff, however, was not a recluse, as he had not been in any part of his life; he was naturally a grand figure at Court, where he was loved and esteemed by the Royal Family; and though, as age advanced, he had become taciturn and austere in manner except to real friends—here, again, the opposite of Napoleon—he was the charm of the social hour with those who knew him well. But for the herd of flatterers who hung on his footsteps he felt, and did not conceal, his dislike. "I detest," he wrote, "the adulation of which I have

become an object. I hear it, and make this reflection: 'What would they have said if success had not attended our arms?' These ill-deserved praises would have been changed into as many unjust censures and stupid invectives."[1]

Twenty years of honoured life were still vouchsafed to Moltke; and like Turenne, Eugene of Savoy, and Wellington, it was his good fortune to read in a nation's eyes that he was a pillar of one of the great Powers of Europe. In his case, it would be more than superfluous to enumerate all the distinctions he obtained; he had nothing in common with the boaster Villars, who sets his achievements out in the style of a herald. A man-of-war and one of the forts of Strasbourg were named after him at the command of the Emperor; a statue was raised to him at his birth-place, Parchim, and a trophy in front of his home in Silesia. The anniversary of the sixtieth year of his service was celebrated at Berlin with military state; stars of noble orders were gratefully bestowed; and the Royal House of Prussia joined in the tribute of honour. During this period the still hale veteran was usually present at the great manœuvres which form part of the training of the Prussian army, and his keen criticism and attention to details showed that time had not yet weakened the force of his intellect. He visited also, with his

[1] "Revue Militaire Suisse. Le Feld-Maréchal Moltke." By Abel Veuglaix. This, too, is characteristic: "We do not exactly know what our army is worth; it has not suffered reverses."

imperial master, the famous battle-fields around Metz; and he gave considerable attention to the German navy, for he had been strongly impressed by the advantage possessed by France in the late war through her command of the sea, which had enabled her to arm her levies for the field.

The multifarious work of the Staff, however, remained the great occupation of its renowned chief, and he found ample scope for his energy and care in duties multiplying in the state of the world around him. The progress of events which had so changed the resources of States and the conditions of war since the first half of the present century, had been going on with accelerated speed; population and civilization were growing; material discovery was, year after year, producing new inventions and destructive weapons of the first importance in the military art. And, at the same time, every Power on the Continent had doubled, trebled, nay, quadrupled its armies; and France especially, rising, as it were, from the dust, had given her frontiers of defeat such prodigious strength, and had armed such huge masses behind the Vosges, that she could be terrible in war at any moment. Moltke grasped the situation in its full significance; never ceased to impress on the staff and the Emperor the necessity of keeping up the armed strength of Germany at the highest point of numbers and efficiency in the field; and went steadily on with preparations for war, following in this Prussia's traditional policy. He gave expression more than once to his views

in the Reichstag and the Prussian House of Peers, of both of which he had been long a member, and his sentiments and language were characteristic. He showed how the military supremacy of a United Germany was an object of alarm and suspicion, and how every State on the Continent was armed to the teeth. But like the Roman Cato, his voice was chiefly raised against the ancient enemy alike hated and feared. He dwelt on the gigantic resources of France; pointed out how the events of 1870-1 were no proof she would be vanquished again, and maintained that she might arise once more to afflict the world with a war of revenge. The irony of facts did not strike the speaker's mind; it did not occur to him to what an extent the development of the military system of Germany and the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine contributed to the unrest and the troubles of Europe.

There was, however, another side to the life of Moltke beside that of the warrior and servant of the State. He had been always attached to the ties of home; he had been an admirable brother, husband, and son, and he was devoted to intellectual tastes and pursuits. It was given him to enjoy many of these blessings during the later part of his long career of honour. After his first great triumph, in 1866, he had received a national grant to buy an estate, and he had wished to regain part of the lands possessed by his fathers in Mecklenburg, near the Elbe. He was unable, however, to fulfil this wish, and he became the owner of a small domain

not far from the old stronghold of Schweidnitz, a scene memorable in the wars of Frederick the Great, and where part of the Crown Prince's army assembled before it marched into Bohemia. Moltke usually passed the summer months at Creisau, amidst the hills and plains he had surveyed in youth, and where he had formed happy associations and kind friends; and he gathered around him to this secluded spot—the last resting-place of his loved Marie—several of the younger members of his far-divided family, an object he had had long at heart.[1] At Creisau Moltke lived as a country gentleman; but his mental activity and the turn of his character were exhibited in the round of his simple life. He found his house ruinous and his manor a waste, and he made both models of skilful improvement. He covered acres with wood, laid out parks and gardens, dammed out streams, made useful works of drainage, and tried all kinds of rural experiments; and in these different labours he gave ample proof of the intelligence, the industry, and the attention to details which had distinguished him in a grander sphere of action. As may be supposed, he did much for education and the training of the young; he built churches, endowed schools, and established savings-banks for the earnings of the poor; and,

[1] Moltke wrote to his brother Adolf, as far back as 1848 ("Letters," vol. i. p. 181, English translation): "My cherished idea is that by degrees we should gather on an estate somewhere or other. . . . I would rather that this possession should be on the beloved soil of Germany."

in a word, he performed the duties of a good English landlord—a class he held in special esteem —in a nook of Europe little accustomed to them.

The veteran, too, in these times of leisure, eagerly recurred to the intellectual studies which had inspired his ambitious and laborious youth, and had been kept up through his manhood of action. Few have been the equals of Moltke in learning and culture; and he devoted a part of each day at Creisau to music, drawing, and careful reading. He was familiar with the literature of all ages, especially with history and good poetry; and he had a marked taste for the philosophic theories of the great German thinkers of the last century. He was fond of speculation, as some of his writings show, on the problems of human life and destiny; "in thought elevate he reasoned high, on providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;" but he was not less at home in other spheres; he delighted in the rich humour of Dickens, and tried to turn the warblings of Moore into German. The warrior, too, like other great warriors, had the deepest reverence for the Lord of Hosts, and he felt the presence of the Divine in human things, as Napoleon, the child of a godless age, could yet rise to the heights of the unknown God. The religious musings of Moltke bear the mark of the German theology of his day; he rejected dogma and cast aside creeds; but this half-scepticism was kept under control by a sound judgment, a deep sense of duty, and especially perhaps by the experience

of a life of hard work. He constantly read a Bible that had belonged to his wife; and he was in the habit of marking favourite texts that expressed truths he, no doubt, felt deeply. "My strength is made perfect in weakness," the strong man noted; and the loyal subject and God-fearing citizen marked out for admiration the noble words: —"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him."

At Creisau Moltke was an excellent host, and occasionally had numerous guests at his board. But his chief pleasure was to live in the company of the grand-nephews and nieces he had adopted—the warrior was unhappily childless—and to watch over their youthful development. He was the delight of these offsets of the family tree—"he was very fond of children, and the little ones repaid his kindness to them with true affection. He spent hours with these great-nephews and great-nieces, who were like young shoots round an old trunk; he looked at picture-books, or they tried to catch him. In his habits and tastes he was simple—nay, austere; he never possessed more than two suits of clothes" —a tradition probably of his youth of privations—and "the unadorned study at Creisau, where he felt happy and comfortable, is a reflection of this innocent simplicity; nor can anyone look without emotion at the plain little room adjoining his study, in a kind of square tower which served him for a

bedroom. A bed and a washstand are the only pieces of furniture in it." In conversation he was still gay and brilliant with those whom he could call friends; he was not without a vein of dry humour; but he "had a horror of affectation and circumlocution, of all outward show and deception; his keen intellect at once separated the chaff from the wheat." As years advanced, the rigid lines of his countenance, in later manhood, softened by degrees; and his venerable face regained something of the beauty and refinement of his look in youth. "One must have seen him walking under his beloved trees, a slim figure in a simple coat, bent a little forward, with a step which remained light and elastic up to his latest years. His clean-shaven face, of a delicate pallor, showed scant traces of advancing age. On that firm and expressive brow time had not printed the furrows which tell of passion and self-indulgence, but there and round the grave eyes mental toil had drawn ennobling lines. His whole appearance was full of dignity and refinement, and his whole countenance was illumined by the purity of a long life, which nothing base had ever marred."

Time dealt tenderly with the old soldier, but its inevitable changes came by degrees. The process of decay told slowly on Moltke; his fine intellect was not dimmed, but it stiffened into a set of fixed ideas, and his memory lost its retentive power. In his eighty-seventh year he began to write his "Précis" of the great war of 1870-1; and it gives

clear proof of these mental defects, for it exaggerates the faults of the Prussian Staff History, and in many particulars is very incorrect. Moltke paid the penalty of extreme old age, in seeing the friends of his life pass away; he has left a touching record how his revered master "struggled with inexhaustible patience and sweetness, one foot on the throne, and another in the grave;[1] and he witnessed the death of the Emperor Frederick, one of his best lieutenants, though a man of peace. Soon after the accession of the present Emperor, the veteran, feeling that he was no longer equal to duties of the most arduous kind, resigned his post as Chief of the Staff; and his young sovereign expressed his sense of his priceless services in language of befitting dignity and grace. The illustrious commander bade farewell to the companions in arms trained by his care, and to the representatives and heads of the great institution, which had so largely contributed to Prussia's triumphs, in significant and characteristic words. He kept his eyes still watchfully fixed on France; he warned his hearers that in the contest he foresaw, "supreme direction would be the chief element of success,"—a truth not placed in sufficient prominence in an age of colossal armies and material force—and he expressed his satisfaction "that the enemy no doubt envied but did not possess anything corresponding to our great General Staff, the object of the care of the last days

[1] "Letters," vol. ii. p. 236, English translation.

of his life."[1] His master spoke only the simple truth when he wrote that his "tenure of the office of Chief of the Staff would be honourably remembered as long as there is a Prussian soldier or a Prussian heart left in the world."

All the work of Moltke, however, was not yet done; he was made President of the Council of National Defence—a commission of high officers of state, the name of which expresses its purpose—and he occasionally accompanied the Emperor in tours of inspection. He was given, too, a permanent abode in the palace of the great General Staff; and his successor often sought the aid of his counsels.[2] He completed his ninetieth year in October, 1890; and the occasion was made one for a great festival throughout the length and breadth of the German Empire. The day was a holiday in every school of the state; and deputations went from many cities and towns to offer addresses to the great Field Marshal. But the chief centre of homage was Berlin; a place of honour was laid out for Moltke in one of the rooms of the Palace of the Staff; and he witnessed torch-light processions of applauding crowds, received greetings of respect from guilds of trades, from bodies of students, from men of letters and art; and, in a

[1] "Le Maréchal de Moltke," par xxx, a French general officer, pp. 252, 253.

[2] Most of the particulars of the later years of Moltke will be found in a work called "Moltke, his life and character," translated by Mary Herms—a book quite unworthy of the subject, but containing useful information.

word, was hailed as one of the founders of the national greatness. The ceremony ended with a grand banquet, when the veteran was thanked for his great deeds by the Emperor and the Royal House, and received an Honorary Marshal's staff; the Princes of Germany joined in the chorus of praise: and a message of congratulation came from the Emperor Francis Joseph, a token of friendship, in spite of Sadowa. This was the last scene of Moltke's public life; he passed quietly away a few months afterwards. His end was sudden, but painless and peaceful; after an evening spent with his adopted family, he felt unwell and retired to his room; in a few moments the struggle with death was over, and an eye-witness, who hastened to the spot on hearing a groan from the dying man, has recorded that his last effort was "to turn his head gently to the left, to the wall where the portrait of his beloved wife hung, surrounded by palms." It is unnecessary to say how Germany mourned her great loss; the flag hung at half-mast from castle and steeple, on men-of-war, and on the fleets of commerce; the bier that carried the remains of Moltke had borne those of his two late sovereigns; and he was attended by the magnificence of war in sorrow. He sleeps by the side of the woman he loved in his quiet home in the Silesian hills; but his country may say with truth of the great man taken from her:[1] "Quidquid ex Agricola amavimus, quidquid mirati sumus, manet mansurumque est in

[1] Tacitus, "Julii Agricolæ Vita," c. 56.

animis hominum, in æternitate temporum, famâ rerum."

Nature gave Moltke the best gift she can bestow on a man in any walk of life, and especially the best in the case of a soldier,[1] great strength of character and firmness of purpose; and she added constancy, daring, and intense perseverance. If she refused imagination of a high order, and the power of attracting the hearts of men, she supplied an intelligence keen and profound, clear insight, vivid perception and thought, and a sound, steadfast, and practical judgment. It was not, however, the fortune of Moltke to direct armies until he had reached old age; and his best years were devoted to the study of war, and to preparing for war in time of peace. His faculties and the accidents of life made military organization his peculiar calling; and this, beyond dispute, was his supreme excellence. His distinctive merit was that he saw more clearly than any other personage in high rank at the time how the circumstances of a new era had largely changed the conditions of war; and he applied this knowledge with consummate skill, with assiduous toil, with never-ceasing care, to that mighty assemblage of force, the Prussian army. He divided masses that otherwise would have been too vast into distinct units manageable in the field; he turned to advantage the increased self-reliance and mental training of the individual soldier, by encouraging him to be more than a

[1] Napoleon.

mere fighting machine; he made the railway system and the extension of roads secure a celerity and precision in the early operations of war, which had not been often possible before; and he caused the telegraph, the rifled gun, and the breech-loading musket, to yield their best uses to the requirements of his art. Ease in great manœuvres on a theatre of war, marked improvement in the lower ranks of the army, rapidity in the assembly of troops, and the adaptation of tactics and strategy to the material inventions by which they were modified, were thus realized in the Prussian service more completely than in that of any other State; and the world beheld the results with amazement. But Moltke achieved much more than this; learned in the history of war almost beyond example, he perfectly understood its best methods; and he so constituted the armed force of Prussia, that it should be ever ready to take the offensive, and to have the initiative in the first operations in the field. It is certain, too, that he had much influence in gaining for intelligence and worth their due place in the higher grades of the army; and it is probable that, through his authority with the king, he had much to do with the selection of even the chief commands. We know, at least, that in 1866 and 1870, the Prussian army, of which he was the real head, possessed a staff and an array of officers by many degrees the best on the Continent, and its leaders were almost all distinguished for zeal, resolution, skill, and acting well in concert,

and in some instances for great capacity. It was the superior organization of the Prussian army, more or less imitated in the other States of Germany, combined with overwhelming superiority of force, and coming in conflict with hostile armies immensely inferior in every respect, and also ill-directed in every way, that, far more than conspicuous genius in war, caused the utter defeat of Austria and France.

The superiority of Moltke as a director of armies is much less conspicuous than in organization for war. Yet in this more exalted and arduous sphere his remarkable faculties were apparent, and he stands on a high, if not on the highest eminence. His plan of operations in 1866 remains open to adverse comment; but he exhibited great decision, and the clearest insight in his arrangements for the march of the Prussian armies, and especially for the movement of the Crown Prince, which led to a decisive result at Sadowa. His project for the defence of Germany against a sudden attack by France, anticipated admirably the scheme of the enemy; his method of invading France on her north-eastern frontier, and forcing her armies northwards, away from Paris, if not original or very striking, was perfectly thought out, and the best conceivable. In carrying out these operations he made mistakes, gave his opponents chances, and did not make the most of overpowering superiority of force; but he steadily accomplished even more than he had hoped, with boldness, resolution, patience,

forethought; and the course he adopted to destroy Macmahon, his march against the Army of Châlons, and the measures he took to ensure its ruin at Sedan, if not exploits of supreme genius, show that he had many of the faculties of a great warrior. If success, too, is to be a test of merit, Moltke's triumphs in the first part of the war of 1870 are without a parallel in the annals of the world; and if this is a most unsafe criterion, it is at least a proof that he had the capacity to turn to account the astounding faults of his enemies, and to bring suddenly on them appalling ruin. In the second part of the war he certainly made a mistake in advancing in haste on Paris; and thus placed the Germans, conquerors as they were, in grave peril for a considerable time. His conduct, nevertheless, in this most trying contest, gives proof of steadfast constancy, and, on some occasions, of consummate skill and profound judgment. He followed the true method to make Paris fall; and it may be assumed that he expected little from the cruel and fruitless attack by bombardment. Nothing, too, can have been more able than the manner in which he employed and strengthened the external zone on a vast field of manœuvre, and than the advantage he took of his central position and interior lines against the provincial armies; and though he was not the author of the decisive movement of Manteuffel against Bourbaki's army—perhaps the finest of the whole war—this was an inspiration derived from his teaching. And if we reflect that these

great achievements were accomplished by a chief far advanced in years, who had not had experience in the field, until the ardour and vigour of youth had been spent, no impartial observer will deny that Moltke has a place amongst the great masters of war.

His place, however, in this illustrious band is not one of the very highest eminence. The conceptions of his campaigns were not original; that of 1866 was borrowed from Frederick the Great—a conception distinctly condemned by Napoleon; that of 1870 was borrowed from Prussian leaders, who had formed it many years before; and, if excellent, it does not display genius. Moltke was never called upon to attempt exploits like those before Mantua in 1796, like the march on Ulm, and the march that led to Marengo; but he did not possess the imaginative power directing the profound calculation and craft, which have given these combinations their matchless splendour; it may safely be affirmed that he was unequal to them. In his operations in the field, too, we sometimes see a want of dexterity and resource; he ought to have crushed the Army of the Rhine, after Wörth and Spicheren, before it reached Metz; and he gave opportunities more than once to Bazaine, which a real general would have made disastrous to him. In his conduct of armies, a deficiency of art, a failure quickly to seize the occasion, a rigidity and even a slowness of movement, are manifest in several striking instances; he never could have achieved feats of

arms like Arcola, Rivoli, and Montmirail; and he seems to have been devoid of the gift of surprise and stratagem, one of the highest gifts of a great captain. But of all these defects the most conspicuous was his constant habit of losing sight of his enemy, and of failing to pursue him in defeat; this is the more remarkable because he possessed advantages in this sphere of his art, completely unknown in former ages; and it may be the consciousness of this, that made him assert that[1] "novices," forsooth, are those who chiefly contend "that pursuit ought always to follow a victory," as if the chase of Wurmser through the defiles of the Brenta, and the march of the conquerors after Jena, do not confute a paradox of the kind. It must, moreover, be kept in mind in considering Moltke's place as a leader in war that he usually had such a superiority of force on his side, and was opposed to commanders of so low an order, that he could hardly have failed to attain success; and this fact must largely detract from his merits. The Austrian army in 1866, the French armies in 1870-1, were not to be compared to the Prussian and German hosts, in all that constitutes military power; and it was not difficult to overcome chiefs of the type of Benedek, Bazaine, and Macmahon, especially in the circumstances in which these were placed.

Certain writers have maintained that, in the

[1] "The Franco-German War," vol. ii. p. 267. English Translation.

conduct of war Moltke hardly committed a single mistake. He would have been the first to condemn such a notion; the aphorism of Turenne remains true, "he is the greatest general whose faults are the fewest," and all generals must fall into error, for they must often act on inadequate knowledge. Moltke made at least his full share of mistakes, apart from what may be called shortcomings. His whole strategy in 1866 has been called false by well-informed and capable critics; indeed we believe it can be only justified on the assumption that he had no better choice in the situation in which he was placed. His disposition of the German armies on the frontier in August, 1870, exposed the First Army to a perilous attack; the same may be said of his arrangements before Borny, and it is difficult to say that he was not to blame for the faults committed before Gravelotte—a battle which would have been lost to the Germans, immense as was their preponderance of force, had Bazaine been anything like a chief. In his movements round Metz, Moltke, too, exposed his communications in a most dangerous way, and that without much certainty of success; and, as General Hamley has justly said, he need not have risked a defeat at Gravelotte. But the greatest of all his mistakes, as we have more than once remarked, was his advance on Paris after Sedan; he thrust himself into the heart of France, at the head of 150,000 men, with the Army of the Rhine at Metz on his rear, imprisoned, no doubt, but still a danger;

with his retreat to Germany almost closed, with a gigantic fortress in his immediate front, with a great nation that might rise up in arms against him, and the results were in a few weeks manifest. Moltke was "brought up," so to speak, like a ship by a tempest. The German armies spread around the capital were perilously exposed for at least three months; their movements were for a time most feeble; they were scarcely able to keep the enemy down; they were nearly compelled to raise the siege. Had Metz held out even a fortnight longer, and had the Army of the Loire been better directed, they would probably have met a serious reverse, and they succeeded at last, in the main, because they received the enthusiastic support of a national crusade. Moltke's strategy is a striking instance that an enemy, fallen though he be, is not to be despised, and that offensive warfare should be conducted on principles proved to be true by experience, and if he triumphed after an internecine conflict, it may confidently be said that he could have compelled France to cede the provinces she ultimately lost, without running the enormous risks that were run.

Moltke, therefore, we think, was not pre-eminent in forming the great combinations of war, in the art known by the name of strategy, though his capacity and excellence are not doubtful. It is more difficult to find his true place in the lesser but most important sphere of tactics, and that chiefly for this reason, that he did not command an

army in the field, in person, on any occasion. It is certain, however, that he thoroughly understood that the power of fire would, in modern war, be infinitely superior to that of force—a question much debated thirty years ago—and that he knew well the value of offensive tactics; and, in theory, he was a most learned tactician, even though it seems that he was some time in comprehending the true relations of the three arms in battles of this day. He was not often present in the field, in war; he never, we have said, actually led troops; and in the immense engagements of the present age, when a general cannot embrace the whole scene of action, and much must be left to subordinates, the most perfect tactician will be often at fault. It may be said, however, that the three great battles, in which Moltke took a real part, Sadowa, Gravelotte, and Sedan, do not exhibit the tactical genius shown at Ramillies, Leuthen, and Austerlitz, the masterpieces of tactics in war; if the attacks at Sadowa were well conducted, nay, the best that could be made as affairs stood, they are not models to be made examples; the German tactics at Gravelotte were very far from good, and Sedan was little more than a massacre. Moltke, it has been said, had a marked liking for flanking, rather than for frontal attacks; this, indeed, is a tradition of Frederick the Great, and in the case of the armies of this age, and of the weapons of destruction they wield, flanking attacks will be more than ever adopted. It is, however, a mistake to pretend that

Moltke's favourite method contrasts with the "central attack" of Napoleon; the great master, like all true generals, ever sought to assail the flank of his enemy, in preference to merely striking his centre in front; but it was the peculiar merit of Napoleon's tactics, that his attacks were usually so arranged, as to be the best possible on the ground before him, and there was no kind of mannerism in these splendid efforts. It has been alleged that Moltke's system of tactics often aimed at "holding" the enemy on the spot, with a force comparatively small at first, and then of attacking him, in front and flank, with masses brought into the field in succession, and certainly more than one of the battles of 1870-1 exhibit this method. But such modes of attack can be only justified when the assailant is certain to be superior in numbers and force, at the decisive moment; and if it is implied that, as a general rule, attacks are to be made piecemeal, and without coherence, by separate divisions of an army, marched only by degrees to the field, all history shows that these tactics are false.

Like all chiefs who have excelled in war, especially if they have done great things, Moltke has deeply impressed the military thought of his time. It has been said of him that he has "displaced the axis of ideas in the art;" [1] and because the organization of the German armies was a main element of their prodigious success, it has been hastily inferred

[1] "Le Maréchal de Moltke," by General Lewal, p. 18.

that mechanism, and not genius in war, is the great secret of ensuring victory. Moltke, we have seen, has distinctly condemned this notion, and it is a great and dangerous mistake. Unquestionably training, discipline, and good arrangement, are influences of supreme importance, in obtaining successful results in war; as Gibbon has remarked, the words that signify an army in the Greek and the Latin tongues, almost explain the history of two great races. Unquestionably too, the greatest commander can do comparatively little with a bad instrument; and in the case of the huge armies of this age there must be more independence in command, and division of labour in the highest grades, than was seen in the days of Jena and Austerlitz. But now, as always, and now more than ever, for war has never before been so vast and rapid, superior direction will be the dominant force that will achieve success in campaigns and battles; the divine part of the art, in Napoleon's language, will more than ever make its magical power felt; a really great captain will more than ever control events. The two great wars in which Moltke took part bring out this truth, indeed, with peculiar clearness. Place Napoleon on the throne of Francis Joseph, and can we doubt that he would have declared war before the Prussian armies were ready, would have struck them down when widely apart, and have marched by the Elbe to Berlin in triumph? Or give Turenne the staff held by Benedek, and we strongly suspect the Crown

Prince's army would have been annihilated before it had reached its supports, and have left Prince Frederick Charles a prey for his enemy. Or again, does anyone suppose that if Moltke had been in the position of Napoleon III., he would have played, at every point, into his adversary's hands? that Wellington would have fought Gravelotte, after the fashion of the worthless Bazaine? or that that great master of defence would have lent an ear to the counsels that doomed the Army of Châlons, and would have hesitated to fall back on Paris? Nay, might not the whole course of the war have taken a wholly different turn, had Bazaine seized the opportunities presented to him, as the General of 1796 would have seized them, or had Chanzy had the supreme direction of the provincial armies of France throughout? The maxim of Napoleon remains true: "A general is the head, the soul of an army; it was Cæsar, not the Roman army, who conquered Gaul; it was Hannibal, not the Carthaginian army, who made the Republic of Rome tremble at its gates; it was not the Macedonian army, but Alexander that reached the Indus; it was not the French army that warred on the Weser and the Inn, but Turenne; it was Frederick the Great, not the Prussian army, who defended Prussia for seven years against the three greatest Powers of Europe." [1]

It is difficult to determine the place that Moltke

[1] Napoleon, "Comment.," vol. vi. p. 115. Ed. 1867.

will hold among great warriors, not because, as has been absurdly said, the difference between war in the present age, and of war in the ages of Turenne and Napoleon, makes a really just comparison hopeless; but because we do not exactly know the part he played in preparing and directing armies, though our knowledge is in many respects sufficient. He will be always an idol of the worshippers of success, and he has been naturally raised to a high eminence in the opinion of soldiers of his time, for he understood better, perhaps, than any other man the existing conditions of modern warfare. In the judgment of history, nevertheless, we do not believe he will be in the very first rank of the few captains supreme in the noblest of arts. His figure seems dwarfed beside that of Napoleon, of whom he has been called, unwisely, the peer; he was markedly deficient in some of the gifts and faculties, which were characteristic of the modern Hannibal. Organization was his peculiar province, yet he achieved no marvels like the preparations for the descent on England in 1803-5, for the campaigns of 1807 and 1812, for the crossing the Danube in 1809; and he did not do as much in this sphere as Turenne, who transformed a feudal militia into an army essentially of a modern aspect, and for many years the terror of Europe. In the conduct of war he was able in the extreme, his conceptions were usually clear and just, his constancy and daring deserve the highest praise; but

he was not original, or what may be called sublime; and he was often wanting in dexterity and art. Not to speak of the mightiest deeds of Napoleon, which have raised him far above all modern warriors, no achievement of Moltke was as brilliant as the march of Gustavus through "the Priest's Lane," as two or three of the marches of Turenne; no conception of his was as splendid and bold as the plan of Villars to descend on Vienna, a plan perfectly feasible when designed, and that must have changed the fortunes of Europe, had it been carried out in 1703; no operation of Moltke was as fine and daring as Eugene's advance up the Po on Turin; and the glories of Metz and Sedan, when calmly examined, pale beside those of Rivoli, Marengo, Jena, and Austerlitz. Napoleon, indeed, has had no successor; but if the mantle of his genius fell on anyone, it was not, as has been said, on Moltke; it fell on the great warrior of the South, Lee, whose exploits around Richmond were not unworthy of those of 1796 and 1814. Nevertheless, Moltke must hold a grand place among the leaders of war in the nineteenth century; he was certainly superior to the Archduke Charles, and to every one of Napoleon's Marshals, and he will probably attain as high a level as Wellington, with whom he had certain points in common, though as an administrator he easily surpassed Wellington, while, on the other hand, he can show no achievement equal in genius and resource to the defence of Portugal.

In one respect, indeed, it is difficult in the extreme to compare Moltke with other great warriors. As he was never actually at the head of troops, we do not exactly know what his influence was, or might have been, over the German soldiery. But he had little imagination, sympathy, or fiery passion, and we may feel convinced that he could never have attained the magical power over the hearts of men possessed by Condé, Marlborough, and Villars, and one of the most striking of the gifts of Napoleon. We see these defects in his writings on war; they are able, judicious, and well worked out, but they are without the sounding march and the energy divine of the masterpieces of the history of war; his "Campaign of Italy," for instance, one of his best works, is, compared to Napoleon's "Campaigns of Italy," what a book of Polybius is to a book of Thucydides, or the verse of Silius Italicus to the song of Homer. For the rest Moltke had little knowledge of men, and was deficient in political insight; he never rose above the ideas of a Prussian junker in affairs of State; he had nothing of the genius which made Marlborough the most perfect diplomatist of his time, of the sagacity of Wellington as a statesman, of the extraordinary capacity shown by Napoleon in mastering all that relates to international questions, to civil administration, to law, and to government. We have already glanced at Moltke's private life; we can only repeat that it was a grand example,

of a noble sense of duty, of work well done, of purity of conduct, of brilliant social converse, of intellectual tastes of the highest order, and of all the virtues that make family and home blessed.

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ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA.

I.

Preface, p. 5, *line* 15, *for* "organization," *read* "organisation."

Contents, p. 14, *line* 30, *for* "Loire," *read* "Loir."

List of Illustrations, p. 16, *line* 3, *for* "Emperor of France" *read* "Emperor of the French."

Ills., line 8, *for* "Emperor of Germany" *read* "German Emperor."

Text, p. 49, *line* 13, *for* "130" *read* "200."

p. 81, *line* 26, note, *for* "en" *read* "on."

p. 90, *line* 32, *for* "inertie" *read* "d'inertie."

p. 96, *line* 17, *for* "sound" *read* "record."

p. 116, *line* 19, *insert* "nearly" *before* "half a million."

p. 122, *lines* 24–5, *insert* "and" *between* "Fröschwiller Elsasshausen," and dele "and Morsbronn."

p. 135, *line* 22, *for* "the strategy" *read* "this strategy."

p. 143, *line* 11, *for* "fully" *read* "effectually."

p. 153, *line* 25, *for* "on" *read* "in."

p. 136, *line* 24, *for* "beaten" *read* "shaken."

p. 156, *line* 18, *for* "formed" *read* "found."

p. 157, *lines* 9–10, *for* "every hamlet and building" *read* "hamlets and buildings;" *for* "an outwork" *read* "outworks."

Ibid., line 12, *for* "reserved" *read* "massed."

p. 162, *line* 22, *for* "in the close columns of the days of his youth" *read* "in columns described as close by eye-witnesses."

p. 187, *line* 13, *for* "fifty" *read* "forty."

p. 191, *line* 11, *for* "thirty" *read* "twenty."

p. 196, *line* 15, *for* "fifty miles" *read* "seventy miles."

p. 243, *last line*, *for* "Rivère" *read* "Rivière."

p. 249, *line* 28, *for* "compagne" *read* "campagne."

p. 258, *line* 25, *for* "Baylon" *read* "Baylen."

p. 293, *line* 21, *for* "now" *read* "lately."

p. 304, *line* 16, *for* "Loire" *read* "Loir."

p. 321, *line* 21, *for* "Gurre" *read* "Guerre."

p. 339, *line* 1, *for* "successes" *read* "success."

p. 369, *line* 5, *for* "Second Army" *read* "First Army."

Ibid., line 16, last word add "the."

p. 376, *line* 20, *for* "Loire" *read* "Rhine."

p. 377, *line* 28, *for* "we" *read* "for us."

p. 410, *line* 18, *for* "was not" *read* "did not."

II.

NOTES.

Page 10. Moltke's works on "Belgium and Holland," and on "Poland and its present State," have been reprinted since the publication of this volume. The first singularly confirms the view I have taken of Moltke's want of political insight; the second is an able *résumé* of the ancient History of Poland, but carefully concealing the truth as to the crime of the Partition, the reason, probably, that it was praised at Berlin.

Page 24. The hatred to France, repeatedly displayed by Moltke, is conspicuously evident in an essay, by him, on "The Western Boundary," also republished since this volume made its appearance. It is a mere caricature of history, expressing, in offensive language, the ferocity of Blücher's camp after Waterloo, and painfully suggestive of what the results would be, to the world, if the military supremacy of Germany were to become absolute.

Page 41. The writer in the *United Service Magazine*, of January, 1894, referred to in the Preface, has denied that the "Retrospect of the Tactical Retrospect" is from the pen of Moltke. Colonel Ouvry, the English translator of this book, says it is, "so far as the tactical reasoning goes,"—that is essentially to all intents and purposes.

Page 49. "The Prussian Staff History" (*p.* 29) says that "the three main Prussian armies stood in three groups at Torgau, Görlitz, and Neisse, which were distant from each other from 100 to 125 miles." There must be some mistake here: the distance from Torgau to Neisse is certainly 200 miles.

Page 76, note. A writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* contemptuously maintains that it was "the hoariest of chestnuts"—Grub Street, I presume, for true stories—that Bismarck, and not Moltke, offered the famous cigar. Be it so. Mighty is "the difference between Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

Page 88. A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* of April, 1894, is the only critic who has seriously examined my account of Moltke's strategy in Bohemia in 1866. He tacitly accepts many of my views, and only traverses indirectly, and in part, the conclusions I have formed; but he charges me with inconsistency and self-contradiction; with having made an important omission, which practically conceals the real position of affairs, at a momentous crisis; and with, at least, two rather grave misstatements. I shall briefly consider these assertions, made, as they are, with extreme confidence. I. The reviewer says, that I am at odds with myself, and (*p.* 415) have "given the whole case away," because, while I have condemned "the double line of operations in 1886," I have told "us elsewhere, that if fault is to be found with Moltke's strategy, this must be attributed, *in the main*, to a position of affairs, which was in no sense of his making," not "choosing" a wrong quotation. Now I have contended, with all the best commentators, that Moltke's advance into Bohemia, on double lines, was "too hazardous in conception," and

"exposed the Prussian armies to great dangers;" but I have also argued, that as Moltke was not responsible for the extreme dissemination of the Prussian armies, the "situation," "*in the main*," excuses his strategy. But I have not said that he was wholly free from blame, which the reviewer was bound to establish, in order to convict me of "inconsistency and self-contradiction;" on the contrary, I have maintained that his operations were, in a certain measure, censurable, even after making every assumption that can be made in his favour. Qualified blame is not absolute blame; the reviewer has disregarded this distinction; and his accusation, I submit, resting on a false basis, does not show that my statements are inconsistent or contradictory. II. The reviewer (*p.* 432) says that, I have not only omitted "all reference to the date of the order for concentration," for the advance into Bohemia, on double lines, but that I have "ignored the information on which Moltke acted." I admit that, in a very brief sketch, I did not allude to Moltke's order in terms; but as I gave the date of the movements, instantly made, in compliance with it, this omission is, obviously, quite immaterial. As to my having ignored the information on which Moltke acted," I have distinctly pointed out what the situation was, having regard to the facts within Moltke's knowledge, when he directed that Bohemia should be invaded; I have said that this "involved the drawing together of large masses, divided by wide distances . . . and the assembling them, in a hostile country, where the Austrians might be collected in force, a contingency by no means improbable," and this exactly corresponds with the information at the time in Moltke's possession. For, though it is true that his letter of instructions, of 22nd June, 1866, asserts that it was improbable "that the main Army of Austria can, in the next few days, be concentrated in Bohemia"—that is near the double line of the Prussian advance—the "Prussian Staff History" (*p.* 62) unequivocally admits, that at this very moment "how far a concentration of the main force of the enemy had proceeded, in Northern Bohemia, was not known;" that is, it was unknown whether the Austrians were, or were not, in proximity to the invaders. The omission I have made is, therefore, of no importance; and certainly I have not "ignored the information on which Moltke acted." And here I must add that this impassioned advocate of Moltke has condemned his client far more decidedly, though by implication, than I have done. Most incautiously he has let slip the words: "if Von Moltke had issued the order without definite knowledge of the Austrian movements; if it had been possible for Benedek to have assembled his army in Northern Bohemia before the Crown Prince and Prince Frederick Charles could join hands; the march of the First Army would have been simply foolhardy." But, in the first place, as a matter of fact, Moltke, on the 22nd and 23rd of June "had not a definite knowledge of the Austrian movements;" in the second place, Benedek, as a matter of probability, "could have assembled his army in Northern Bohemia before the Crown Prince and Prince Frederick Charles" effected their junction, and actually, to a considerable extent, did so; and therefore the reviewer has damned Moltke with his "ifs," and has, in his own words, completely "given up the case" of his idol. III. The reviewer says (*p.* 433) that my criticism is "fair," when I wrote that on the "26th and 27th of June, and until after the end of the 27th," "Benedek had time, and space

enough, to assail the Crown Prince in overwhelming numbers, and that he let a grand opportunity slip;" he only maintains that I have made a misstatement, inasmuch as my "dates are inaccurate." On this point I join issue with the writer, and refer him to Derrécagaix, i. 292, the "Austrian Staff History, iii. 49, and even the "Prussian Staff History," 67—; these authorities show that my dates are correct, and refute him completely. IV. The last misstatement alleged against me is (*p.* 445) that I have asserted that "the message sent to the Crown Prince," on the eve of Sadowa, "was entrusted to a single officer;" and I am kindly referred to the "Prussian Staff History," as if I had never read it. My statement may or may not be erroneous; but the meaning of the "Prussian Staff History" (*p.* 166) may well be that one officer was sent to Kamenitz, the Head Quarters of Prince Frederick Charles, and only one to Koniginhof, the Headquarters of the Crown Prince; and Colonel Lecomte—Jomini's chief aide-de-camp—expressly says, in his most valuable "History of the War of 1866" (tome i., p. 406) "C'etait bien confiant, de la part du Général de Moltke, de se contenter d'un seul messager." I flatter myself, therefore, that I have answered the reviewer, on every point, sucessfully. I could charge him with incapacity in reasoning, and in dealing with evidence, and with a want of comprehension of war, in its higher aspects; but I simply turn his own guns against him. In the courteous language he has employed towards myself, "his methods are so diametrically opposed to our own ideas of judicious military criticism, his comparisons are so misleading, and his errors as to fact are so numerous—that we find something to quarrel with in every page."

Page 122. The critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette* above mentioned, says that Macmahon summoned Failly to his assistance on August 5th, not on the 6th. He is in error. Macmahon sent a message to Failly on the 5th; but it was not until the 6th that he ordered Failly to join him, and then with one division only. See Failly's apology, and Derrécagaix: "La Guerre Moderne," ii. 179.

Page 123—6. The *United Service Magazine* writer, minute, but not philosophic—he reminds me of Wellington's phrase, "damned particularising"—contends that my sketch of Wörth "bristles with" "inaccuracies." He has, I think, shown that Morsbronn was not, "in part, fortified"—some of the houses were, perhaps, crenelated—and Macmahon's artillery contained "mitrailleuses," as well as cannon proper, as if a mitrailleuse was not of the nature of "a gun." But the rest of his carping fails, and simply proves that he has not mastered the general character, or the details of the battle. The 5th Prussian Corps did "fall boldly on" on the morning of August 1st; the 2nd Bavarian and the 11th Prussian Corps did cooperate with it; and their efforts did "completely fail." Even the Prussian Staff History, i. 163, cannot conceal the truth; and Derrécagaix: "La Guerre Moderne," ii. 187, says, "à 11 heures du matin, l'offensive des Allemands avait été repoussée, sur toute la ligne. Notre succès était nettement affirmée." The Crown Prince "did send orders to suspend the course of the fight for a time;" this is stated in terms, in the Prussian Staff History, i. 163, and in Derrécagaix, ii. 189. A part, and a considerable part, of the "French right" "was compelled to fall back towards the centre, round Elsasshausen;" and if the main body retreated on the Grossewald,

in the rear of Elsasshausen, this is immaterial. The charges of the French cavalry were at least as "fine" as that of the Six Hundred at Balaclava, which the critic, unlike Tennyson, sneers at; they were "magnifique," if not "la guerre," and they did give considerable relief to the French infantry. Derrécagaix, ii. 193. Lastly, the 1st Bavarian Corps did "make the overwhelming pressure impossible to withstand," as may be gathered from the Prussian Staff History, i. 191, and from the Staff map of the battle. Derrécagaix, ii. 195, expressly says, "le 1er corps bavarois était entré en ligne, et avait donné un nouvel elan à l'offensive."

Page 37. A critic in the *Broad Arrow* challenges my conclusion, that "Moltke let a grand opportunity slip," after Wörth and Spicheren, and failed "to strike a blow that might have been decisive." It might be enough to refer him to my note, quoting from Major Adams, who makes this charge against Moltke; but as he has invited me to "work out the problem," I will meet him. On the evening of August 6th, Macmahon's forces, the right wing of the Army of the Rhine, were flying routed towards Haguenau and Saverne; and if a division of Failly's corps in some measure covered the retreat, and the German cavalry reserves were not in the front, still there was no reason why a vigorous pursuit should not have been begun, and why it should not have been successful. But as the Prussian Staff History, i. 198, admits, "the Quarter Staff of the Third Army was at first quite ignorant of the enemy's line of retreat," because they did not follow it; and when a feeble and tardy pursuit was ordered, it was in a wholly wrong direction. Moltke is not, perhaps, to be blamed for this, as he was far away; but he certainly seems to have approved of it: the Third Army did not even move until August 8th, and it lost all contact with an utterly defeated enemy. As regards the remaining parts of the Army of the Rhine, the centre and the left wing, the case against Moltke is much worse. Spicheren fought, also, on August 6th, shattered the 2nd corps of Frossard, and placed the 3rd, 4th, and 5th corps and the Guards in grave danger, standing as they nearly were on a front to a flank; and with the exception, perhaps, of the 5th corps, these forces retreated in a thoroughly demoralised state, as is attested by many witnesses. See Bazaine "L'Armée du Rhin," pp. 40, i. "Guerre de 1870, pp. 42, 43, 44. This part of the French army had only reached the German Nied, on August 8th; at that moment not less than seven German corps, of the First and Second Armies, the 1st, 7th, 8th, 3rd, 4th, 10th, and the Guards, were assembled around the Middle Sarre, about twenty miles distant. Moltke was practically on the spot, and he might have directed fully 200,000 victorious troops, against about 135,000 morally beaten troops, with the result that he must all but certainly have won a crushing victory, from about the 10th to the 12th of August, for the French, in their existing condition, could hardly have escaped. This was not done, and in fact a "grand opportunity" was lost, and "a blow that might have been decisive" was not struck. I should add that I have guarded myself from condemning Moltke's cautious strategy on this occasion; but it was not like that of Napoleon; it gave the French chances; and it was not free from danger, as the event proved.

Page 145. The writer in the *United Service Magazine* contemptuously rejects my statement that Colombey Nouilly or Borny

was, "in fact, a drawn battle." I refer him to Major Adams' "Great Campaigns," p. 530, "Night fell on a *drawn* battle, in which both sides claim the victory."

Page 155. I. The position of Napoleon, after Caldiero, was extremely like that of Bazaine, after Mars La Tour; but the movement by which Napoleon out-manœuvred and defeated Alvinzi, at Arcola, was far more difficult than that which, I contend, was open to Bazaine. The writer in the *Broad Arrow*, however, denies that the two cases were analogous (1) because Napoleon had only 20,000 men, and Bazaine had 180,000; (2) because Napoleon was "inside Verona" when he formed his plan, and therefore had not to go through the town, as Bazaine would have had to go through Metz, in the supposed instance. I reply, that it was not a question of moving 180,000 men, but of about 125,000—the force that fought at Gravelotte—and that Bazaine had, or might have had, relatively, nearly as ample means to transport this mass of troops across the Moselle as Napoleon had to transport his small army across the Adige; and (2) that Napoleon had to go through Verona, as appears from the Commentaries, i. 254, ed. 1867. II. Mr. Archibald Forbes has argued, in *The United Service Magazine*, of February, 1894, that the operation, indicated for Bazaine, was impossible, or must have been frustrated by Moltke, and that General Hamley is in error in suggesting a movement of the kind. Mr. Forbes has, I think, shown, as I have always considered, that the march projected for the French by General Hamley may have approached the Moselle too much, and may not have been the best possible; but General Hamley's view is, I am convinced, essentially correct; and I altogether dissent from Mr. Forbes's main proposition. Let us see what Bazaine might have done, had he been, as I have assumed, a real chief. He might have made up his mind by midnight on August 16th; and having concealed his purpose by demonstrations from his rear, he might have had his army assembled on the western bank of the Moselle, and around Metz, by the morning of the 17th. There were already perhaps six bridges on the Moselle (Rivière, 22); three or four more might have been thrown during the day, and there was a considerable number of boats available for the passage. In these circumstances the best part of the army, say 125,000 men, might have been transported to the eastern bank by the evening of the 17th, and the necessary impedimenta need not have been very cumbrous. (See Rivière, 35.) The troops having been supplied with food and munitions for four days—this was often done by Napoleon—the whole army might have been out of Metz, and ready to march on the communications of the enemy, say by noon on the 18th. Demonstrations, meanwhile, might have been made to perplex the Germans, in contact with the French only through the First Army (Prussian Staff History, 2, 3); and Bazaine, had he been a general, might have easily reached the French Nied in the evening, and been on the Sarre by the 20th. What would have been the operations of Moltke and his lieutenants? I will grant to Mr. Forbes, what is very unlikely, that the chiefs of the 1st corps of the First Army, and of the 7th corps, might have apprised Moltke, at Pont à Mousson, by the evening of the 18th, that Bazaine had got out of Metz, and was making to the south-east. But, even on this assumption, the best that can be made for the Germans, it would have been improbable, in the very highest degree, that Bazaine would have been

stopped on his march, or that the German communications would have been saved. Moltke had all his arrangements made for an advance westwards, on the supposition that Bazaine was making for the Meuse; the Second Army was far on its way in that direction, the Third Army was about to move from Nancy, and contact with the enemy had been almost lost. Under these conditions time would have been required to make an enormous change of front, and to direct the German armies, or any considerable part of them, on a course the very opposite to that marked out for them; and Moltke, who took two days before he resolved to march against Macmahon, and who was repeatedly perplexed by sudden movements, would, and must, have paused for many hours before he had given orders to pursue Bazaine. The Germans could hardly have been on the track of the marshal before the evening of the 19th; but by the time they had even approached him, Bazaine would have escaped, and his enemy's communications would have been seized and ravaged. Mr. Forbes ignores the enormous difficulties in the way of the Germans, and, above all, the decisive effect which surprise must have had in retarding their movements. He considers the whole subject, in a word, as though it were a game of chess, in which the pieces could be moved with perfect ease and knowledge. He is, also, quite wrong in saying that General Hamley is the only soldier who suggested the operation in question; two generals in Bazaine's army did; so did the Austrian staff; so, I have reason to believe, did Chanzy; so, I know, did a most distinguished British general, now dead, who often discussed the question with myself.

Page 162. The attack of Steinmetz seems to have been made, at first, in the usual company columns; but these became so confused, that eye-witnesses have described them as close columns. The distinction is immaterial for any practical purpose.

Page 163. The defeat of the First Army at Gravelotte cannot be really questioned, and I, for one, never put faith in the myth that that army was sacrificed, in order to gain time for the tardy and doubtful outflanking movement, by which, owing to the incapacity of Bazaine, the French right was ultimately turned. To judge from a review of Major Kunz's book in *The Times* of February 8th, 1894—I cannot read the original, or procure a translation—German commentators condemn the German tactics at Gravelotte, and especially those of Steinmetz, for the same reasons as I have done, but more severely.

Page 165. A host of critics have thrown their shields around Moltke, like a Homeric hero, and have tried to challenge my exposure of his flagrant misstatements as to the numbers of the armies which fought at Gravelotte. They cannot deny that he has left out of the account part of the 1st corps of the First Army, and they do not venture to assert that the French—about 125,000 strong, according to the best authorities—were, as Moltke has written, "more than 180,000 engaged." But they say that I am in error in stating that Moltke left out the 2nd corps; and they maintain that when Moltke declared that the German corps on the field were only seven, he meant eight. I think Moltke did leave out the 2nd corps, and did write seven deliberately; the Prussian Staff History which, no doubt, Moltke had before him, 1, 438, refers to seven corps only, and the 2nd corps, making up the eight, is only referred to in an

appendix, so far as concerns any enumeration. But, be this as it may, these critics admit that, on the supposition they make, Moltke must have omitted the cavalry on the field, nearly 25,000 strong, and about equal to the 2nd corps in numbers; these judicious eulogists lift him out of Scylla to throw him back into Charybdis. From whatever reason—I impute no motives—Moltke enormously underrated the force of the Germans at Gravelotte, and enormously overrated the force of the French; after this, it is rather too much to expect rational people to swallow the figures of the Prussian Staff History of the War of 1870-1.

Page 219. For the same reason that I cannot quote from Kunz, I cannot refer to Hœnig's work, on the second part of the War of 1870–1. But if I may judge from the review in *The Times*, before cited, German critics at present do not approve of Moltke's hasty advance on Paris after Sedan, and are in accord with the conclusions I have formed on the subject.

Page 220. The writer in the *Pall Mall Gazette* scoffs at my statement that the Empress "retired into Belgium" after Sedan. Her Majesty did so: she despatched a telegraphic message, "filons en Belgique;" and Rüstow, 2, 187, says she did go to Belgium before coming to England. I probably know more of what was going on at the Tuileries in 1870 than this writer.

Page 266. Hœnig, according to the review in *The Times* of February 9th, 1894, fully confirms all that I have written as to the mistakes and false operations of Moltke before and after Coulmiers.

Page 270. The *Pall Mall Gazette* critic mocks at me for accepting, or nearly so, the figures of Major Adams as to the German loss at Coulmiers. I certainly reject those of the Prussian Staff, which in this, as in other instances, are absolutely false. As to the "buncombe" of D'Aurelle and the illustrious Chanzy, I pass by impertinence.

Page 287. I again refer to *The Times'* review of February 9th, 1894, for Hœnig's complete confirmation of my views as to the position of the belligerent armies around Orleans, in November, 1870, and as to the faults committed by the German commanders, faults which Moltke would have rued, had Chanzy directed the Army of the Loire, and had not Gambetta unwisely meddled. Equally impartial German criticism should be applied to the first part of the War; I believe it would bear out the conclusions I have arrived at: what is infinitely more important, it might, in some degree, explode the fetish worship of Moltke, so injurious to military thought in England.

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